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SCRIPTURAL ARGUMENTS

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UNITARIAN FAITH.

THIRD EDITION.

PRINTED FOR THE

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BOSTON,

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SCRIPTURAL ARGUMENTS.

UNITARIAN Christians believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God and the Saviour of men. They believe in the divinity of his mission and in the divinity of his doctrines. They believe that the Gospel, which he proclaimed, came from God; that the knowledge it imparts, the morality it enjoins, the spirit it breathes, the acceptance it provides, the promises it makes, the prospects it exhibits, the rewards it proposes, the punishments it threatens, all proceed from the great Jehovah. But they do not believe, that Jesus Christ is the Supreme God. They believe that, though exalted far above all other created intelligences, he is a being distinct from, inferior to, and dependent upon, the Father Almighty. For this belief they urge, among other reasons, the following arguments from the Scriptures.

I. Because Jesus Christ is represented by the sacred writers to be as distinct a being from God the Father as one man is distinct from another. "It is written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. *I am one* who bear witness of myself, and *the Father* that sent me beareth witness of me," John viii, 17, 18.

II. Because he not only never said that himself was God, but, on the contrary, spoke of the *Father*, who sent him as God, and as the *only God.* "This is life eternal, that they might know *Thee the only true God*, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," John xvii, 3. This language our Saviour used in solemn prayer to "*his* Father and *our* Father."

III. Because he is declared in unnumbered instances, to be the *Son of God.* "And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, this is *my beloved Son*, in whom I am well pleased," Matth. iii, 17. Can a son be *coeval* and the *same* with his father?

IV. Because he is styled *the Christ*, or *the anointed of God.* "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power," Acts x, 38. Is he who anoints the same with him who is anointed?

V. Because he is represented as a *Priest.* "Consider the * * * *high Priest* of our profession, Christ Jesus," Heb. iii, 1. The office of a priest is to *minister to God.* Christ, then, as a priest, cannot be God.

VI. Because Christ is *Mediator* between the "One God," and "men." "For there is one God, and one *Mediator between God and men*, the man Christ Jesus," 1 Tim. ii, 5.

VII. Because as *the Saviour* of men, he *was sent by the Father.* "And we have seen and do testify that *the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour* of the world," 1 John iv, 14.

VIII. Because he is an *apostle, appointed by God.* "Consider the apostle, * * * Christ Jesus, who was faithful to *him that appointed* him," Heb. iii, 1, 2.

IX. Because Christ is represented as our *intercessor* with God. "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also *maketh intercession for us*," Rom. viii, 34.

X. Because the *head* of Christ is *God*. "I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and *the head of Christ is God*," 1 Cor. xi, 3.

XI. Because in the same sense, in which we are said to belong to Christ, *Christ* is said to *belong to God*. "And ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's," 1 Cor. iii, 23.

XII. Because Christ says, "My Father is greater than all," John x, 29. Is not the Father, then, greater than the Son?

XIII. Because he affirms, in another connexion, and without the least qualification, "*My Father is greater than I*," John xiv, 28.

XIV. Because he virtually *denies that he is God*, when he exclaims, "why callest thou *me good?* There is none good but *one*, that is God," Matth. xix, 17.

XV. Because our Saviour, after having said, "I and my Father are one," gives his disciples distinctly to understand that he did not mean, *one in substance*, equal in power and glory, but *one* only in *affection* and *design*, &c. as clearly appears from the prayer he offers to his Father in their behalf,—"that *they all may be one;* as *thou*, Father, art *in me*, and *I in thee*, that they also may be *one in us*," John xvii, 21.

XVI. Because the *Father* is called the God of *Christ*, as he is the God of *Christians*. "Jesus saith unto her,

* * * go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father ; and to *my God* and *your God*," John xx, 17.

XVII. Because an apostle says of GOD, in distinction from the "Lord Jesus Christ," that HE is the "*only* Potentate," and that HE "*only* hath immortality," 1 Tim. vi, 15, 16.

XVIII. Because it is the express declaration of the same apostle, that the *Father* is the *one God*, and there *is none other*. "Though there be that are called Gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) yet *to us there is but one God, the Father*, of whom are all things," 1 Cor. viii, 5, 6.

XIX Because the power which Christ possessed was, as himself affirmed, *given* to him. "All power is *given* unto me," &c, Matth. xxviii, 18.

XX. Because he positively denies himself to be the author of his miraculous works, but refers them to the *Father*, or the holy spirit of God. "The *Father* that dwelleth in me, *he* doeth the works," John xiv, 10. "If I cast out devils *by the spirit of God*," &c, Matth. xii, 28.

XXI. Because he distinctly states, that these works bear witness, not to *his own power*, but that the *Father had sent him*, John v, 36.

XXII. Because he expressly affirms, that the works were done, not in his own, but in his *Father's name*, John x, 25.

XXIII. Because he asserts, that "him hath God the *Father sealed ;*" i. e. *to God the Father* he was indebted for his credentials, John vi, 27.

XXIV. Because he declares, that he is not the author of his own doctrine. "My doctrine is *not mine*, but his that sent me," John vii, 16, 17.

XXV. Because he represents himself as having been *instructed by the Father*. "*As my Father hath taught me*, I speak these things," John viii, 28.

XXVI. Because he refers *invariably* to the *Father* as the *origin* of the *authority* by which he spoke and acted, "The Father hath *given* to the Son authority," &c. John v, 26, 27.

XXVII. Because he acknowledges his dependence on his heavenly Father for example and direction in all his doings. "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do," John v, 19. "The Father loveth the Son, and *sheweth* him all things, that himself doeth," John v, 20.

XXVIII. Because he says, "*I seek not mine own glory;* but *I honor my Father*," John viii, 49, 50.

XXIX. Because he declares, "if I honor *myself*, my honor is nothing; it is *my Father* that honoreth me," John viii, 54.

XXX. Because an apostle declares, that in Christ dwelt all fulness, *because it so pleased the Father*, Col. i, 19.

XXXI. Because Christ is uniformly represented in the scriptures, not as the *primary*, but the *intermediate*, cause of all things relating to our salvation. "*One God, the Father, of whom* are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, *by whom* are all things, and we by *him*," 1 Cor. viii, 6.

XXXII. Because he declares, "I am not come of myself," into the world, "for I proceeded forth and

came from God," John viii. 42, vii, 28. "Jesus knowing *** that he *came from God and went to God*," &c, John xiii, 3.

XXXIII. Because he affirms, that he *had not the disposal* of the highest *places* in his own kingdom. "To sit on my right hand and on my left *is not mine to give*, but it shall be given to them for whom it is *prepared of my Father*," Matth. xx, 23.

XXXIV. Because our Saviour, referring his disciples to a future time, when they would understand more accurately concerning him, expressly declares that *then* they would know him to be *entirely dependent* upon the Father. "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, [i. e. crucified him,] then shall ye know that I am he, [i. e. the Messiah,] and that *I do nothing of myself;* but as my *Father hath taught me*, I speak these things," John viii, 28.

XXXV. Because our Saviour always professed to have *no will of his own;* but to be ever entirely *guided* and *governed* by the will of his heavenly Father. "For I came down from heaven, not to do *mine own will*, but the will of *him* that sent me," John vi, 38.

XXXVI. Because he expressly denies that he is possessed of the divine attribute of *independent existence*. "As the living Father hath sent me, and *I live by the Father*," &c, John vi, 57.

XXXVII. Because he expressly disclaims the possession of the divine attribute of *underived existence*. "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he *given* to the Son to have life in himself," John v, 26.

XXXVIII. Because he positively denies, that he is possessed of the divine attribute of *omnipotence*. "I can of mine own self do nothing," John v, 30.

XXXIX. Because he expressly disclaims the possession of divine attribute of *omniscience.* "But of that day, and that hour, *knoweth* no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither *the Son, but my Father only,*" Matt. xxiv. Mark xiii, 32.

XL. Because Christ is said in the Scriptures to have been "*tempted of the devil,*" Matth. iv, 1. But "*God* cannot be tempted with evil."

XLI. Because it is related of our Saviour, that "he continued all night in *prayer* to God," Luke vi, 12. Why should Christ thus pray, if he himself were God?

XLII. Because, in presence of a numerous company before the resurrection of Lazarus, *he gave thanks to the Father for having heard him.* "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me, and I knew that thou hearest me always," John xi, 41, 42.

XLIII. Because Jesus *besought his Father to glorify him.* "And now, O Father, *glorify thou me* with thyself, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was," John xvii, 5. The being who prayed to God to glorify him, *cannot* be God.

XLIV. Because he *implored* that, if it were possible, the bitter cup might pass from him, adding, "nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt," Matth. xxvi, 39.

XLV. Because he said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matth. xxvii, 46. *Can* he who uttered this be the supreme God?

XLVI. Because he never paid his adorations to *himself, the Son,* nor to the *Holy Ghost,* as he should have done, had the Son and the Holy Ghost been *God*; but *always to the Father.*

XLVII. Because he never instructed his disciples to worship *himself* or the *Holy Ghost*, but the *Father*, and the Father *only*. "When ye pray, say, our *Father* which art in heaven," Luke xi, 2. "In that day, *ye shall ask me nothing*. Whatsoever ye ask of the *Father* in my name," &c, John xvi, 23. "The hour cometh and now is, when the *true worshippers shall worship the Father* in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh *such* to worship *him*," John iv, 23.

XLVIII. Because it was not the practice of the apostles to pay religious homage to Christ, but to *God* the Father *through* Christ. "I thank God *through* Jesus Christ," Rom. vii, 25. "To God *only* wise, be glory *through* Christ," Rom. xvi, 27. "I bow my knees unto the *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ," Eph. iii, 14.

XLIX. Because St Peter, immediately after being filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, thus addressed the Jews; "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man *approved of God* among you, by miracles, and wonders and signs, which *God did by him* in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain; *whom God hath raised up*," &c, Acts ii, 22—24.

L. Because St Paul expressly states, that "*all things are of God*, who hath reconciled us to himself *by* Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. v, 18.

LI. Because the same apostle gives "thanks *to God*, who giveth us the victory *through* our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. xv, 57.

LII. Because it is said, that it is "*to the glory of God the Father*," that "every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord," Phil. ii, 11.

LIII. Because the Scriptures affirm, that "Christ *glorified not himself* to be made a high priest, but He [glorified him] who said unto him, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," Heb. v, 5.

LIV. Because it is expressly asserted, that *God gave to Christ* the Revelation which was made to the author of the Apocalypse, Rev. i, 1.

LV. Because an apostle speaks of Christ, *only as the image* of God. "Who is the image of the invisible God," Col. i, 15. 2 Cor. iv, 4. It would be absurd to call any one *his own image*.

LVI. Because Christ is stated to be "the *first born* of every *creature*," Col. i, 15.

LVII. Because he is said to be "the beginning of the creation of God," Rev. iii, 14.

LVIII. Because the Scriptures affirm, in so many words, that "Jesus was made a little *lower* than the angels," Heb. ii, 9. Can God become lower than his creatures ?

LIX. Because Peter declares that, "*Christ received from God the Father honour and glory*, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, this is my beloved Son," &c. 2 Peter i, 17.

LX. Because it is represented as necessary that the Saviour of mankind should "*be made like unto his brethren*," Heb. ii, 17.

LXI. Because, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Christ is *compared with Moses* in a manner that would be impious, if he were the Supreme God. "For this man

[Christ] was counted worthy of more glory than Moses inasmuch," &c, Heb. iii, 3.

LXII. Because he is represented as being the *servant*, the *chosen*, the *beloved* of God, and the *recipient of God's Spirit.* "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen, in whom my soul is well pleased; I will put my spirit upon him," &c. Matth. xii, 18.

LXIII. Because he himself expressly declares that, it was in consequence of *his doing what pleased the Father*, that the Father was *with him, and did not leave him alone.* "He that *sent* me is *with me;* the Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please him," John viii, 29.

LXIV. Because he is said to have "*increased* in wisdom, and in favour with *God* and man," Luke ii, 52.

LXV. Because he speaks of himself as one who had *received commands* from the Father. "The Father, who sent me, he *gave me* a commandment," John xii, 49.

LXVI. Because he is represented as *obeying* the Father, and as having been "obedient unto death," Phil. ii, 8. Even as the Father said unto me, so I speak, John xii, 50. "I have kept my Father's commandments," John xv, 10.

LXVII. Because Christ "*learned obedience* by the things which he *suffered,*" and *through sufferings was made perfect by God*, Heb. v, 8; ii, 10.

LXVIII. Because he is spoken of in the Scriptures as the *first born among many brethren*, Rom. viii, 29. Has God *brethren?*

LXIX. Because Christ calls every one, who obeys God, his *brother.* "Whosoever shall do the will of *my Father* in heaven, the same is *my brother*, Matth. xii, 50.

LXX. Because he offers to the faithful the like distinction and honour that himself has with the Father. "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne," Rev. iii, 21.

LXXI. Because *God*, in the latter ages, hath spoken *by his Son*, and *appointed him* heir of all things, Heb. i, 2.

LXXII. Because Christ is styled *the first begotten of the dead*, Rev. i, 5.

LXXIII. Because it is declared that *God raised him from the dead.* "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses," Acts ii, 32.

LXXIV. Because God poured out upon the Apostles the Holy Spirit, *through Jesus Christ*, Tit. iii, 6.

LXXV. Because the reason, assigned for the Holy Spirit not having been received earlier, is, that *Jesus was not then glorified.* "The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified," John vii, 39.

LXXVI. Because it is affirmed that Christ was *exalted by God* to be a Prince and a Saviour, Acts v, 31.

LXXVII. Because God *made* that same Jesus, who was crucified, both Lord and Christ, Acts ii, 36.

LXXVIII. Because God *gave him* a name which is above every name, Phil. ii, 9.

LXXIX. Because Christ was *ordained of* God to be the judge of quick and dead, Acts x, 42.

LXXX. Because God will judge the secrets of men *by* Jesus Christ, Rom. iii, 16.

LXXXI. Because all judgment *is committed* to Christ *by the Father*, John v, 22.

LXXXII. Because our Saviour grounds the importance of his judgment solely upon the circumstances, that

it is *not* exclusively *his own* judgment, which he pronounces, but that of the Father who sent him. "If I judge, my judgment is true ; *for I am not alone,* but *I and the Father* that sent me," John viii, 16.

LXXXIII. Because it is said, that when he was received up into heaven, he "*sat on the right hand of God,*" Mark xvi, 19.

LXXXIV. Because St Paul affirms, that Christ, even since his ascension, "liveth *unto* God," and "liveth *by* the power of God," Rom. vi, 10. 2 Cor. xiii, 4.

LXXXV. Because it is affirmed of Christ, that " when all things shall be subdued under him, then shall the *Son also himself be subject* unto him that put all things under him, that *God may be all in all,*" 1 Cor. xv, 28.

LXXXVI. Because the Apostle John asserts that "*no man hath seen God* at any time ;" which is not true, if Christ were God.

LXXXVII. Because, in the *prophecies* of the O. T. that relate to Christ, he is spoken of as a being distinct from and inferior to God, Deut. xviii, 15. John i, 45.

LXXXVIII. Because the Jews never expected, that any other than a being distinct from and inferior to God, was to be their Messiah, and yet there is no evidence that our Saviour ever so much as hinted to them that this expectation was erroneous.

LXXXIX. Because it does not appear from the Scriptures, that the Jews, except in two instances, ever opposed our Saviour on the ground that he pretended to *be God* or *equal with God;* whereas, had it been his custom to assume such identity or equality, in his conversation with a people so strongly attached to the doctrine of the *divine unity,* he would have found him-

self involved in a perpetual controversy with them on this point, some traces of which must have appeared in the N. T.

XC. Because *in these two instances*, when charged, in the one case, with making himself God, and in the other, with making himself equal with God, he *positively denies the charges.* In reply to the charge of assuming to be *equal with God*, he says immediately, "The Son can do *nothing* of himself, but what he seeth the Father do;" and directly after, "I can of my mine own self do nothing," John v, 19, 30. In answer to the charge of *making himself God*, he appeals to the Jews, in substance, thus; Your own Scriptures call Moses a god, and your magistrates gods; I am surely not inferior to them, yet I did not call myself *God*, but only *Son* of God, John x, 34, 35, 36.

XCI. Because, had his immediate disciples believed him to be the Almighty, would they have been so *familiar* with him, have *argued* with him, *betrayed* him, *denied* him, *fled from* him, and *left him to be dragged to the cross?*

XCII. Because the Apostles, after they had been filled with the Holy Ghost on the day of pentecost, did not preach that Christ was God; but preached what was altogether inconsistent with such a doctrine; Acts ii, 22; xiii, 23; xvii, 3, 31; xxii, 8.

XCIII. Because there is no evidence to prove, that the first converts to Christianity ever incurred the imputation of *idolatry* from the Jews, as they must have done, had they believed and taught that the *Son*, as well as the *Father*, is Jehovah; while it is notorious that this imputation has been among the most common of the Jewish

reproaches against Christians, since the Trinity became a doctrine of the church.

XCIV. Because there are, in the N. T. *seventeen* passages, wherein the *Father* is styled *one* or *only God*, while there is not a single passage in which the *Son* is so styled,

XCV. Because there are 320 passages, in which the *Father* is absolutely, and by way of *eminence*, called God; while there is *not one* in which the *Son* is thus called.

XCVI. Because there are 105 passages, in which the *Father* is denominated God, with *peculiarly high titles and epithets*, whereas the *Son* is not once so denominated.

XCVII. Because there are 90 passages, wherein it is declared that *all prayers* and *praises* ought to be offered to HIM and that every thing ought to be ultimately directed to HIS *honour and glory;* while of the *Son* no such declaration is ever made.

XCVIII. Because, of 1300 passages in the N. T. wherein the word *God* is mentioned, not one necessarily implies the existence of more than *one person* in the Godhead, or that this one is any other than the *Father.*

XCIX. Because the passages, wherein the *Son* is declared, *positively*, or by the clearest implication, to be *subordinate to the Father, deriving his being from Him, receiving from Him his divine power, and acting in all things wholly according to His will*, are in number above 300.

C. Because in a word, the supremacy of the Father, and the inferiority of the Son, is the *simple unembarrassed*, and *current* doctrine of the Bible; whereas, that of their *equality* or *identity* is clothed in mystery, encumbered with difficulties, and dependent, at the best, upon few passages for support.

Rev. Joseph Allen (A Ch. for

ON

HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

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DISCOURSE.

Ecclesiastes vii. 29.

Lo! this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

It is obvious that the term "man" occurs here in its generic sense, denoting the race collectively. The word rendered "upright" may with more precision be translated "right." It implies no qualities positively virtuous, but simply the absence of all obliquity. And the whole passage conveys this important sentiment, *God hath made man right;* with a proper nature, possessing such powers as are requisite in the place he fills, and for all the designs of his being. When we begin to live there is nothing in our moral frame which is itself wrong, or must necessarily produce sin. Whatever be the amount of wickedness in the characters of men, it is not the proper fruit of the human nature, but results entirely from a voluntary abuse and perversion of that nature.

This doctrine is opposed to some opinions commonly inculcated on the subject of man's condition, but not opposed to Scripture; not opposed to facts, as they lie around us in society; not opposed to conscience and to reason. From each of these sources are drawn the ar-

guments we employ for its support. The discussion I propose on this occasion will bear chiefly on the point of *native hereditary depravity*, which gives us a false account of the cause of that moral evil which is seen and felt in the world. But before I enter on this main design, let me suggest a few remarks on another branch of the general subject; I mean, *total depravity*, which gives us as false a view of the *degree* of sin found among men, as the other does of its *origin*. The two dogmas are inseparable in the popular notions of human character, and both have a bad tendency so far as they operate without modification from other principles.

If the word "total" have any meaning in the phrase "total depravity," it excludes every good feeling, desire, purpose, and action, and makes the character of mankind consist solely of bad dispositions, passions, and deeds. To be totally depraved is to be evil in every part, and evil always. Where now is the being on the face of the earth, who has done nothing but sin; whose every act has been wicked, and all his thoughts, emotions, and desires, corrupt? Where is the man, concerning whom, it is *true* that since he was born he has had in his mind nothing pure, and in his conduct nothing right? You cannot find such a being; this may be the description of a devil, but not of a man. We may imagine such a sinner, but we never saw one. We are greatly deceived by the popular theological division of our race into two classes, between which is drawn a line straight and inflexible, as between two distinct orders of beings having no alliance, and unable to pass from one to the other. That division is a mere fiction. That line is nowhere apparent among the

real characters which we meet and mingle with on the stage of life. The world contains no such beings as the saints and sinners described in many sermons and painted in many tracts and magazines. They are as unlike the actual men and women around us, as if the one were described as having no senses, and the other as having no souls.

But of what use is any description of mankind which wants a counterpart in nature and life? It cannot be true—for a glance at the world as it is, belies it. Look abroad for yourselves, brethren, and tell me if you can discover among the good, one who has ceased to be frail, and incapable of becoming evil. Take the accounts which men give you of themselves—take their own judgments of their own characters—will you conclude that any are totally holy? But is it fair to pronounce all who may be sinners, *totally depraved*, when you dare not pronounce all who are saints, *totally pure?* There is as much evidence of a partial depravity in the one case, as of a partial holiness in the other. There are as many proofs of a little remaining good in those who pass for wicked men, as of some remaining corruption in those reputed pious men. It is as correct to esteem the latter entirely holy, as to esteem the former entirely depraved. The fact is, there are no unmixed characters among men. The best are not perfect in virtue, the worst may still be capable of a recovery from vice. There are degrees of goodness, and degrees of sin; the former ascending from a very low, to almost angelic virtue, the latter descending from simple failing to the deepest guilt. However, to my narrow view it may seem that no vestige of what is good

remains in some of my fellow-beings, or even that their capacity of goodness is extinct, yet there is an eye which discerns more clearly, and may discover symptoms of reviving health, where all to me wears the aspect of death. I dare not, I never will say, that there slumbers not beneath the ruins, on which I gaze with despair, a spark of virtue, which shall be kindled yet into a celestial flame. I leave an abandoned sinner, hopeless of restoring him myself, but remembering that what is impossible with man is possible with God. And as to the doctrine that we are all totally depraved, I must consider it as I should a proposition which declared that all men were fools, or all men were giants, all men were monsters. We are not *totally* any thing whatever, for be the quality what it may, there are ten thousand chances that we have a little of its opposite too. Some are wise; but not always, nor in all things. Some are timorous generally; yet on an occasion can be bold as lions. Some are indolent generally; yet, for some desired end, will rouse themselves to the most vigorous activity. Where nothing is fixed and permanent, but all in progress, pressing onward, it is rash to attempt nice definitions and descriptions, for the object may change under your hand. So it is, to affix such characteristics as denote completeness in good or evil, to mutable men. The only just and true account of human character is that which represents it as mixed and imperfect in all its forms.

The Scriptures are often quoted to prove the total depravity of mankind. But there are two very obvious principles of interpretation, which ought to be applied to the passages thus employed, and which remove at once

all pretence for using them in evidence of such a doctrine.

1. What is declared in universal terms is not always to be received without limitation. We often affirm absolutely, and in the most unqualified language, what we know to be true, only for the most part and with some exceptions. All books contain more or less examples of such propositions as the author designs his readers should understand, not to the full extent of their literal import, but as general truths. When God was about to destroy a guilty generation by the deluge, it is recorded, "And God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted its way." "All flesh" is a universal term, including every man alive. But there was, at least, one exception; for "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Paul, in his address to the Lystrians, says, that "God had, in times past, suffered *all* nations to walk in their own ways." But he had not so suffered the Jews, who had enjoyed a revelation and been subjected to peculiar restraints. John tells the early converts, "Ye know all things." We are compelled by the very nature of the case to put a limitation on the word "all," which reduces the meaning of the passage to the bare affirmation, that they knew whatever they needed as Christians to know. The proposition, as it stands, ascribes omniscience to them.

In like manner, although some passages of Scripture, which speak of the degeneracy of mankind at certain periods, are so expressed, that we might suppose not an individual remained, who had the least goodness in him, we learn from sacred history, that there was always a

remnant of righteous men in periods the most degenerate. The first chapter of Romans describes the character of the nations in the darkest colours, and of Gentiles and Jews affirms, "they are all under sin." But corrupt as were the great body of the Jews when Messiah came, we are made acquainted in the Gospels and Acts with many excellent characters. Of Simeon we read, "He was a just and devout man." Nathaniel was "an Israelite indeed, without guile." Anna "served God with alms and prayers." The Baptist's parents "were righteous before God, and walked in his ordinances blameless." Among the Gentiles, the Roman Centurion and Cornelius, with "devout Greeks not a few, are worthy examples and vindicate us in the assertion, that there was, doubtless, a large portion of society, who had not shared that depravity which Paul so vividly describes. Indeed, if you will go over the catalogue of crimes of which he accused the heathen, you will see that it is utterly impossible for such wickedness to have been universal. He himself allows us to make an extensive exception, for he speaks of Gentiles "who did by nature the things contained in the law." From Psalm liii. Paul quotes a passage, and accommodates it to his own description. That passage applies to men at a particular period, and not to the race. It is misunderstood for want of a little fairness and attention; "Every one of them is gone back—they have altogether become filthy—there is none that doeth good, no, not one." The persons here intended were then living or had lived previously. There is nothing which justifies us in including all the human beings who shall ever live. Besides, not even all that genera-

tion is comprehended ; for it is added immediately after these words ; " have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people ?" It seems, then, there were some who were good enough to be called God's people, in opposition to the workers of iniquity, notwithstanding it was affirmed that not one of the children of men did good, no, not one. If we persist in giving an absolute acceptance to all general propositions, we shall get into difficulties from which nothing can relieve us. There is obviously no justice in our interpreting passages which speak in the strong language of eastern hyperbole of the corruption of men, as if they were strict philosophical statements. We must take these passages as they were meant to be taken, as vivid representations of a fact, not exact definitions of a doctrine.

2. The second rule to be applied to those parts of Scripture, which relate to the moral condition of particular persons, communities, or generations, is this ; All which was true of them, may not be true of us ;—we have been educated with all the benefits of Christian light, and under the influence of Christian institutions. It would be false, and no credit to the Gospel, to say that a very great difference is not perceptible between Christian countries and others,—a difference, which affects the whole population of such countries, and not merely the body of professed believers. Now to take phrases, employed to represent the moral character of ancient heathens, and apply them with no modification to all people of all ages and climes, Christian as well as Pagan, is unjust to the last degree, if not palpably absurd. Just so far as we resemble the characters de-

picted in Scripture, the language used respecting them will convey a fair account of us, and no further.

It is truly astonishing that people do not see this, and that so many feel obliged to take to themselves a description of guilt of which they are not conscious, because the description is in the Bible. What a stumbling block does it throw in the way of simple minds, thus to bind them down to acknowledge, as their own, a character, the original of which lived some thousand years ago! No less than this is done by those who make the account in the first chapters of Romans, a description of the human race, or who, from such passages, infer the doctrine that all men are entirely depraved. Those portions of Scripture, which, like this, describe in glowing language the prevalent corruptions of present or past times, are not to be made the basis of any doctrine respecting human nature itself, or the human character universally, and in all periods; we must interpret them accordingly; the nature of the case requires and justifies it. When we have collected into one horrid group, all the sick, maimed, blind, deaf, decrepid, who crowd the hospitals or streets of a great city, we have, surely, not gained materials for a description of its inhabitants. A traveller, passing through a fine fertile country, would be deemed mad, if he filled his journal with accounts of the barren spots which were scattered here and there in his way, or gave us a grave narrative of the beggars, thieves, and knaves, whom it was his fortune to encounter, as an index to the morals of the people. A historian who should collect a long catalogue of bad princes; with descriptions of public calamities, and political mistakes, not

noticing at all the blessings which followed from the government of good princes, or the numerous prosperous events of their several reigns, would hardly be respected as authority. But the history of mankind, their moral history, demands no less fidelity than this ; and we ought not to take it from those who have studied men only in their vices.

But regard the general character of the race as bad as you may, it is not a beneficial habit to dwell chiefly on what is evil in it. The individual who does so, injures himself, and society shares the injury. Whence has proceeded that chilling scepticism which confounds all moral distinctions, laughs at virtue and vice as mere names, and at the goodness apparent in society, as the silly efforts of fools to cheat each other? In many cases, I believe, from this very practice of which I now complain. Begin by allowing yourself to put the worst colouring on human actions, habitually to see things in their evil aspects, and to ascribe what seems good to doubtful motives, you may soon come to make no important difference in your opinion, between the best men and the worst ; and you may end, at last, by disowning all moral distinctions, that you may sneer alike at all mankind.—It is worthy of remark, that the most notorious sceptics, the bitterest enemies to Christianity, are the very men who have laboured most zealously in the base work of degrading the species. In their writings, every good affection is derided ; every pretence to virtue mocked ; and the noblest actions and sentiments, resolved into some vile principle. No such lessons on depravity as they teach ; none so thorough, and none so

appalling ; but they are consistent. Having reduced man to a level with the brutes, they give him brutal pleasures as his proper good, and a brute's death as his proper end.

Besides the danger of causing scepticism, there are others in the habit of magnifying what is bad in human character, which ought to put us equally on our guard. These may be made apparent to any one who has observed the tendency of excessive feelings, to disease the mind in all its powers. It cannot be denied that very serious mischief is occasioned by allowing the sense of shame and remorse to be too strongly and too long operative in cases where there is a natural proneness to despondence. But there are no instances where a habit of self-disparagement will not, at length, produce evils nearly, or quite, as great. And these are sometimes fatal to the character, where they are not to the present enjoyment of the individual. Let the constant feeling in a man's mind, respecting himself, be such as degrades him in his own eyes, and you will discover in him that moral apathy which refuses all exertion, under the plea that it is useless ; and which has ceased, at once, to hope and to desire improvement, from an idea that it is not possible. To strive after moral excellence, one must retain the consciousness that he is capable of it ; when that is gone, all is lost. Now the morbid habit of exaggerating one's own sins, takes away this feeling ; and a similar effect, in a wider extent, may be produced by unduly magnifying what is faulty in the character of mankind generally. Confine a young man of warm heart, with all that confidence in the professions of oth-

ers, usual at his age, to the society of persons, professedly religious, but from whom he shall daily hear the language of self-abuse, mingled with unsparing censures of their neighbours,—who shall question sarcastically the soundness of every apparent virtue, and colour every fault in the deepest dye,—who, in fine, shall habitually inveigh against human depravity, and set mankind before him in their worst possible lights,—and what may you expect? If he rely on their statements, or from ignorance be unable to refute them, how must they affect his mind? Will they not inspire him with unwonted jealousy, not only of his own emotions, but of the motives of others? Will they not supplant his generous confidence by base suspicion; his disposition to admire, esteem, and love, by the malignant feelings of abhorrence and resentment; his desire of excellence, by doubts of the reality of all virtue?

However it may seem to us now, we may be assured that the habit of looking only at the bad qualities of men, has a tendency like a constant association with wicked people. As he who should dwell in the midst of assassins, knaves, and sharpers, would insensibly acquire a temper, quite averse to the friendly sympathies, so will the man whose mind seeks the dark images of guilt for its common company. He will have their hues reflected on himself. His respect for others will necessarily be impaired by contemplating them most often in the light of depraved beings, adversaries to God and goodness. His self-respect can hardly be retained with the belief that he is no better than they. And it would not be surprising if his permanent disposition should settle into

something resembling the moral apathy, which we have before traced from a kindred cause.

I have said that society shares the evils of too exclusive a regard to what is bad in human character ; and it is easily shewn. If the doctrine of depravity produced its full, natural effects, we should be, indeed, " hateful, and hating one another ;" social intercouse would be more like the herding of animals of prey, than the associating of Christians. And even its most modified influence has some such consequences as this supposes. Two men, who look upon each other as totally corrupt, cannot feel mutual confidence or affection ; and the pious people, who, with still stronger emotions, must approach those, whom they believe the enemies of all they ought to love most, will not cherish a sentiment kinder than pity, even if they do not allow themselves in abhorrence towards them. If a temporary check of benevolent affections will weaken them ; how can brotherly love exist, with much strength, in the heart which is daily filled with new bitterness, by the faith, that nearly all, who might be the objects of its sympathy, are thoroughly wicked, and so, unworthy of affection ?

An attentive observer, will, perhaps, see cause to trace that spirit of exclusion, which erects its high walls in the vineyard of Christ, and repels, with such cruelty, the hand offered from without, and answers the voice of charity with the rebuke of bigotry, to this origin. To shut out from your fellowship those, who are believed to be excluded from God's mercy, is not strange ; to hate a being who is utterly odious, is no more so. And thus, in learning the lesson of total depravity, we learn how to indulge our bad feelings with a good excuse.

Better then,—yes, infinitely better, is it for us all, to turn away our eyes from the spectacle of guilt, and gaze intently on the lovelier picture of virtue; better forget as much, and as fast as we can, the vices of others, however we may preserve the memory of our own; better hold up for our imitation the illustrious good, than study, amid the shades, the totally depraved. In other words, if we must confine ourselves to either extreme, in our contemplation of human character, let us choose the *best* and not the *worst*. By too fair an estimate of men, we may lose something, perhaps, but it will not be our generous affections, our love of excellence, our admiration for virtue, and the purpose to emulate what we admire. By dwelling on man's corruptions only, whatever we may gain, it will not be a kinder, nor a purer heart. Who would prefer to have the image of a Judas continually present to his thoughts, rather than commune at the lonely hour, with the benignant Jesus?

I return now, to that part of the common doctrine of Depravity, which concerns its origin. In this it is maintained that men are *born* sinners. The vices apparent in mature life, are traced back to a corrupt nature, and represented as its proper and necessary fruits. Now, to such an opinion, we cannot assent, for many strong reasons.

I. In the first place, *it implies an impossibility*. Sin has been defined "the transgression of the law." That law cannot have been transgressed which is not known, together with the obligations of obedience, and consequences of disobedience. But we come into life, in total, blank ignorance, not possessing the knowledge of a sin-

gle substance in nature, much less of the principles of moral duty. How can we be sinners by birth, when we are not then conscious even of the power to sin? Who can look upon a sleeping *infant* and say, there slumbers an *enemy* of God; when, upon that helpless creature's mind, not even the image of the mother that fosters it, has, as yet, been impressed, and it has felt no *love*, far less *hatred?* We shrink instinctively from charging guilt on a being so evidently innocent; but this is only shrinking from truth, if men are born sinners; for then, every infant of a day old is as truly depraved, as the criminal of half a century. Should this seem inadmissible, reject the doctrine that implies it.

But our opponents urge against all this, that the corruption of human nature, if not discoverable in an infant, will certainly be developed as soon as he becomes capable of moral action at all—and is fairly inferred from the earliest intelligent conduct. On what does this inference rest? From what may we so confidently draw a conclusion of such extent and importance? Does it fairly spring from the indications of character after the age of infancy? I ask, then, whether we ought to draw our conclusions from one side of the case, without looking at the other; and if it be not unjust to infer more from the indications of what is *bad* in childhood, than from the indications of what is *good?* Let any man produce an instance of a human being, at that period, who has manifested *no other* disposition or propensity than such as are evil; it is impossible. Our blessed Saviour said, concerning children, "of such is the kingdom of heaven;" "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom."

The Apostle says, "in malice be ye children." And what eye, but one jaundiced with the darkest prejudice, can have failed to discover, in the conduct of youth, abundant evidences of purity of heart? If bad tempers sometimes appear, yet, let us not make too much of them, or because of them, underrate the more numerous proofs of better qualities. I do not hesitate to put it to any man's conscience to declare, whether he has not seen as much that was attractive and amiable, as of the contrary in children; whether, in all their artless conversation, their joyous sports, their ardent attachments, their open, unsuspicious conduct in the presence of their elders, their sense of shame, when reproved, and their readiness to forgive the faults of others, he can discover nothing but the malignity of a heart entirely corrupt? I maintain there is, at least, *equal* reason to infer the absolute purity and innocence of human nature, from the indications of disposition in childhood, as to presume the opposite. And since it will not be denied that the least sinful portion of every community is its youth; since the nearer you approach the fountain, the purer are the streams; I know not but we are warranted in believing that the fountain itself is unpolluted.

If the sinful actions of men at *any* period of life, are proofs of a nature originally corrupt, what are we to affirm of Adam's sin? Our opponents are wont to extol him as not only sinless, but positively righteous; he transgressed, however. And his offence just as strongly proves that his nature was originally tainted, as our offences prove the depravity of our nature. And if they are compelled to own, that in him there was no sin when

created, why do they not believe that in us there was no sin when born ? God is our creator as he was Adam's,—Our nature is the same as our progenitor's,—we sin,—he sinned ; we have a corrupt nature,—his nature was uncorrupt. How does this hold together ? If *our* having sinned, proves us to have been *born* sinful, *his* having sinned, proves him to have been *made* sinful. The premises are equally broad in both cases ; and the same conclusion must be drawn.

If we recur to the passage in Genesis, which is often quoted on this subject, we find it there recorded, that God created man "in his own image." Now, whatever that image be, I affirm it was not impressed on Adam only, but is also ascribed to his posterity. The Apostle James, speaking of the vices of the tongue, says, "Therewith bless we God, and therewith curse we *men* which are made after the similitude of God." If, then, this similitude was, in the case of Adam, not *destroyed* by his offence, shall we infer from our sins, that we never *possessed* it, in express contradiction of scripture ?

Again, it may be inquired with propriety, what evidence we have, respecting those deemed by our opponents Regenerate, that their nature is not the *same* which they had before they "were born again ?" this ought to be proved, before we infer from the doctrine of Regeneration that men are born totally depraved. The Scriptures do not assert or imply, in all they contain on this subject, that "a new nature" is received, but only that a new character is acquired. Putting off the old man with his deeds, turning from the error of the wicked, to the obedience of the just, being redeemed from a vain con-

versation, neither of them intends parting with human nature itself. Nor is it an uncommon thing to hear those who are reputed to be "new creatures" complaining of their remaining corruption; a circumstance which does not seem to indicate, that in conversion they gained a *new nature*.

If, indeed, we inquire what it is, in the most remarkable instances of a moral renovation, which constitutes the difference between their present and their former state, it would be discovered that the *better use* and *direction* of the powers and affections they had *always possessed*, was the principal distinction. The same appetites, desires, passions, which *once* disturbed the mind, would *still* do so, if the control of conscience were to be removed, and the habits of virtue broken. To pass from a high place in the religious esteem of his brethren, to a very low one, might require less of every supposed convert, than he or they imagine. This would be seen more clearly, if it were not that a man who "falls away" is immediately reported a hypocrite; although his sincerity was probably less deservedly questioned than his share in our common nature was palpably manifested.

Regeneration is called by such as believe the doctrine of native depravity, a work of special grace; God only can accomplish it; and it is *finished*, at once, wherever he undertakes. But the fact that, after all, there should be so much left of what regeneration is supposed to remove, native depravity, gives the affair a nearer resemblance to human, than divine, transactions. And it shews, that nothing can be justly argued respecting the character of our nature, from the testimony of those who think *their own* has been changed.

II. It has been pretended, by some advocates of the doctrine of hereditary depravity, that it implies no more than that men are "destitute of *holiness* at birth." If this signify that we have no positively virtuous qualities, then, none deny it. But we believe there are *no sinful* qualities either; and by the same kind of reasoning which satisfies them, without going a step further, we may arrive at our own conclusion. Is it said for instance, on their part, sin cannot proceed from a *holy* nature? We add, with as much propriety, neither can virtue proceed from an unholy nature. The fact is as clear that men do good, as that they do evil; and one kind of moral action proves as much in regard to the quality of our nature, as the other, so far as it goes.

But, in truth, the doctrine I now oppose, does comprehend more than a simple destitution of holiness; and we are taught in it, that men are naturally indisposed to all good, and inclined to all evil, having no power to obey the will of God. To this doctrine we object, secondly, because *it is contrary to the Analogy of the rest of God's works.* Every other creature of God, so far as our knowledge extends, is formed with a nature exactly adapted to the place it fills, and the purposes of its being. We can discover no exception; where we are acquainted with the kind of life and action any particular class of animals were designed for, we perceive every part of their frame nicely fitted to its proper use. In our own bodies, how admirably are the various organs prepared for the purposes intended in their formation. For what end, then, did God make man? What is the ultimate design of our being? Is not virtue, religion, holi-

ness allowed to be the principal thing? Was it not with a view to these objects that our moral nature was conferred? Is it possible, then, that God, who has created all other animals with just such a nature as they require, and who has so wonderfully adjusted our own corporeal frame, that not a muscle or fibre—not the minutest part is out of place, or incapable of its proper action, has yet sent us into life, with our *souls* in such a state, that we are *utterly incapable* of the very purpose for which alone, we *have* souls? How are we to explain this departure of infinite wisdom from its ordinary course? Is man the only being, concerning whom, it is of no importance that his faculties should be fitted for their service? Is he, who is but a little lower than the angels, made with less care and kindness, than the sparrow that falleth to the ground?

But, rejoins an opponent, the first human being acted for his posterity, and they partake his guilt. Thus says the Westminster Catechism, "the Covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself but his posterity, all mankind sinned in him. The sinfulness of that state, into which man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature. All mankind by the fall, lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to the miseries of this life, to death, and the pains of hell forever." Where in the Bible, I ask, do you find such language as this? Where are we told that the covenant with Adam was made for his posterity likewise? The Bible says only, "in the day *thou* eatest, *thou* shalt die." There is not even an allusion to his posterity.

And how can we have sinned sixty centuries before we began to live? How can we be guilty of that, which, but for history, we never should have known? Does not guilt imply the consciousness of having sinned? What penitent was ever smitten with remorse for Adam's sin? This is a most absurd theory indeed; but its absurdity is not its worst feature.

Suppose a human tribunal should arraign a young man as a capital offender, because of a murder committed by one of his remotest ancestors, and condemn him to die; would society suffer such a judgment? And is the nature of the transaction altered by carrying it up to the Court of Heaven? Is it any the less unjust for uncounted millions to be laid "under the wrath and curse of God" forever, in consequence of a single offence of a man who lived ages before they were born, than for one to be put to death for his immediate progenitor's crime? Where shall we find a name for that Covenant, which barters the salvation of a world of beings not yet existing, and suspends their eternal weal or wo upon the first act of a frail creature, who, it is foreseen, will fall? We know no Covenants, made by one man for another, without his consent; and will the infinitely good God own such a contract as his? No. If there is any thing certain in religion, it is that God cannot be the author of that which would be criminal in his creatures. The Bible is silent about this Covenant. No page of it records the fatal instrument.

III. Another argument against the doctrine of native depravity, is, that *it destroys the foundation of human Accountability.*

When we see a man who has been blind from his birth, do we regard the consequences of that defect as subject of blame? Would it not be alike foolish and cruel to upbraid him for his ignorance of letters, or stumbling in his walk? When we see a man who was born an idiot, witness his wild and melancholy movements, or hear that shriek which fills the heart with anguish, do we not lament this absence of intellect as a misfortune? Suppose by some strange occurrence he were to cause the death of another, would he be guilty of murder? What then, if instead of a deficiency of reason, he were born with some *moral* defect, which hinders his *doing* right, as the other would hinder his *judging* right; is he any more to blame for the consequences? I think not. An idiot's wild behaviour is ascribed to his *mental* unsoundness. A sinner's vices proceed from his *moral* unsoundness. But be it mental or moral, if we were *born* thus unsound, no power save the Creator's could have prevented the defect; and if the sinner is, nothwithstanding, blameworthy, so is the idiot. A child of parents whose frame is diseased may inherit that disease, yet who dares accuse the child? And by what right are we accused if we inherit diseased souls, while, we are not to blame for inheriting diseased bodies?

The whole affair of deriving moral qualities from our parents by birth, has absurdity on its front. We might as well talk of inheriting *learning* from an *erudite* father as *sin* from a *corrupt* father. To make a proper moral agent there must be all the power of whatever kind that is requisite for the performance of duty. If we have a part of this power, but not the whole, we are not moral

agents. For the insane man has a part, and yet while insane is not accountable. If by nature we have a capacity to discriminate between good and evil, to understand moral rules, and feel our obligations, and yet have no power to fulfil them, we then have only a part of what moral agents must have in order to their being accountable for their actions; and so by nature we are not responsible. You may say all of native depravity which you can say of insanity here; both are accidents, brought on men by the providence of God, without their own agency. The accident of being born is surely not less beyond our control than a blow on the head, or a brain fever. And if to the former we owe our bad hearts, are we not as excusable as if we could trace them to the latter? Ascribe sin to any thing out of ourselves, and which we can neither escape nor remedy, you have then destroyed our accountability. Our birth is just such a circumstance, and by tracing iniquity to nativity, you make us no more to blame for the one than the other,—no more answerable for sinning than for having been born.

An evasion is often resorted to, which attempts to shun this dilemma by resolving all sin into a fault of the will. Men have *power* to do right, but they *will* not. Was this bad *will* equally bad when we first exercised the power of volition? Was our will perverse when we came into life? Did the cause why we do not will to obey God, exist at our birth and in our souls, as they were then? If so, the same conclusion follows. We are not accountable. If not, native depravity vanishes. Define that depravity as you please; call our inability to

do our duty by any name you choose ; I only ask if we were *born* with it ? That is the great and only point in question. And be it a disjointed limb, or idiocy, or a moral taint or any thing else, if the cause of sin be native, we are not responsible, since we could not help it. But all human experience proves that we *are* accountable. All men feel guilty when they sin, and are conscious that they have done not only what they *ought* not, but what they *need* not have done. Conscience blames *us* for our sins, not nature. Every reproof it utters is an argument against native depravity. We never learn from that the apology of inability,—conscience knows no inability to do what God commands to be done. It upbraids us for every fault as the consequence of our own folly ; for every crime as the result of our own self-indulgence, and voluntary desertion of the right way. The doctrine of native sinfulness cannot be reconciled to its dictates ; the one affirms what the other denies ; the one makes us feel *worthy* of punishment, the other makes all punishment unjust, because it must be inflicted for what we could not help. Conscience traces back the sins of men to a cause wholly in themselves ; native depravity traces them all back to another person ; derives them from a cause which God alone could have hindered, and God alone can remove.

IV. We object once more to this doctrine—that *it casts reproach on the divine character and government.*

Our first instruction in religion is the reply to that solemn question of our Catechism, " Who made you ?" can we ever forget the holy awe, the melting tenderness, which possessed our minds, when, at the fond parents

knee we uttered that truth, which so mysteriously connected us with the mighty power of Heaven, and the wide universe below? Can we ever forget the new feeling of alliance to every object around us, which sprung from our first conceptions of the meaning of the words "God made me and all things?" Can we ever forget the sweet emotions of confidence and love, which rushed into the heart, when the revered instructor taught us what God was, by giving him his own name, and directing to our Almighty Creator, the soft affections which already bound us to himself? And, in after life, at those sad, melancholy moments, when the consciousness of our unworthiness has weighed down our spirits, and we have contemplated the iniquity of our fellow-creatures with deepest sorrow; when triumphant vice has cast its baleful glare upon our path, and fraud, oppression, cruelty, stung the soul to madness; have we not felt it a blessed refuge to remember God? Yes, we have turned gladly away from the heart-sickening scenes of an evil world to hold peaceful communion with the Just and Holy One. We have been comforted by the thought that in him virtue still had a friend, and innocence a protector; but alas! the doctrine of depravity takes away this last refuge. God made us, indeed, but how? He made us what we were when we began to live—when we were born; and if we were born depraved, he made us so. Thus, then, surrounded with a throng of miserable creatures "under the wrath and curse of God," utterly sinful, and capable of nothing better, we can only look upward to the Being who made them what they are, and see in Heaven but the God who has created that sin

which defiles the earth. The pall of moral death hangs over the tainted mass of human society ; and above, are spread out the black clouds of vengeance before the throne of him, who waits but till he can gather a *few* out of the corrupt multitude, to *save* them, and then will pour out upon our heads his burning vials ; and begin, in our helpless souls, a series of torments, which shall never be mitigated and never end.

In other words, the doctrine of depravity teaches us, that, having given us a nature entirely corrupt, incapable of good, and prone to all evil, God placed us in this world with a command to do what he knows we cannot do ; and then condemns us to eternal wo for doing that which he knows we cannot help doing. He continually afflicts us for sins, which can only be prevented by an influence of his Spirit ; while that he purposely withholds. Moreover, taken in connexion with its kindred doctrines, this teaches us that it was the divine will from all eternity that human beings *should* act just as they *do*, and perish everlastingly, for having acted thus. That God selected out of the human race, before *they* were created, or the *world was*, a certain definite number, concerning whom, he determined that they *should* be holy and happy ; and the rest he *made to be* sinners, that in punishing them he might glorify his vindictive justice. Or, to come nearer still, although we all have the same corrupt nature, and deserve one no more than another from our Creator, he is pleased, by an act of his power, to make a part of us new creatures ; giving them power and disposition to do his will, and rewarding them for obe-

dience; leaving the remainder as morally helpless as they were born, and then punishing them for disobedience.

We can never reconcile such views of the divine government with what the Bible, reason, and nature, all proclaim respecting it. Is God *impartial* to give his Spirit, which all alike need, and for the same reason, a reason out of their reach, to a few only? Is God *just* to punish us for the consequences of not possessing a new heart, when he alone can give it to us? Is God *merciful* to make us with a nature which is incapable of goodness; and then inflicting endless torments on us for not being good? Turn this doctrine which way you will, it is equally unworthy of the Creator and Father of mankind. And the only possible solution to the overwhelming mystery of such a method of treating his cretures, is divine sovereignty. God does so because he chooses to do so; and none can say to him, "Why dost thou this?" A similar apology to that for the cruelties of an earthly despot; and one as valid, in that case, as in this; it is no apology at all. Power gives no right; will alters not what, in itself, is bad. The very thing to be explained is, how God *can* thus will, what, in itself, is so unrighteous and cruel.—But He has not so willed, and blessed be his Holy Name! we are not compelled to receive such opinions as his truth. We have not so learned Christ.

V. The doctrine of native depravity is further shewn to be false by *its inconsistency with the design of our present life as probationary.*

We are placed in this world to be trained by a course

of discipline and trial, for another; preparation is our great work here; this all admit; this the Scriptures teach. On any other supposition, human life cannot be explained. But in the very idea of probation, it is implied, that the subject to be proved has not yet a *fixed* character when the trial begins. And if we are sent into this world to *prepare* for another, it is to be presumed that we are not already fitted when we enter it, for the doom which that preparation is intended to decide. Nor can we imagine that God would appoint a long series of moral discipline, and provide an ample store of moral means, for the training of a creature, whom he knew to be incapable of deriving the least benefit from them.

According to this doctrine, however, we come into life with a fixed character; we are then decidedly, entirely, and for aught we can ever do, incurably wicked. We are "under the wrath and curse of God, and liable to the pains of hell forever." If so, how can the days or years which may follow, be termed a season of probation? We deserve hell as soon as we are born; can we ever deserve more? Our doom is decided at the outset, and cannot be the *consequence* of a trial which it *precedes*. In fact, to talk of trial here, is idle and absurd. Especially when we recollect that it is also declared by the advocates of this doctrine, that nothing less than a special irresistible agency of God can ever alter the character we bring with us into the world. Such an agency, says Dr Chalmers, as would be requisite to turn *stones* into *bread*. Such an agency, says another, as was put forth in creating the world. And to hasten, retard, or even procure this divine interposition, is alike impossible, let us do

what we may. It lies in the counsel of his own will, and God only knows how, when, or on whom the regenerating grace shall descend. If any one share the blessing, his change of character will be as much the *sole* act of God, as if he had himself been without sense or motion up to the very moment of its occurrence. In his own time God will operate on the soul for its recovery. Till then, existence is a mere blank. We can lose nothing, since all was lost at the beginning; we can gain nothing, because all we do prior to regeneration, is done in vain; we are not made worse by the neglect of moral means, for it is impossible to be more than *totally* depraved; we are not improved by the use of them, for that would detract from the sovereignty of divine grace to which as the *sole* unaided cause, all change for the better is attributed. Now, I may ask, if there is any probation where a man is neither made better nor worse, gains nothing, and loses nothing, and is left just as he was found? It is idle to pretend so; as idle as to call that a race for victory, in which one is compelled to run against another, but is told, at the outset, that it is determined to crown his companion, and not him, be the result what it may.

There are many important facts, which, while they go to establish the doctrine that the present life is probationary, are not to be reconciled with the doctrine that men are born totally depraved. For instance, how *various* are the actions of mankind. But for this variety of action, there is no room, on the supposition that we are entirely wicked before we have done any thing. Were this true, we should persist in one unvaried series of sins, with not a virtuous thought or wish intervening. Ask

now your own history for its reports ; does it give in only a tale of ceaseless guilt ? Do you remember no time when you were comparatively innocent ? Do you find far back among your early days, no sincere prayers, no pure desires, no good resolutions, no kindness for man, and no fear of God ? Be it that you feel yourself a sinner, yea, one of the deepest die ; yet, were you always as bad as you are now ? Would your chance for salvation have been no better, if you had died in infancy, than if you were summoned to day ? Admit this, and you give up native depravity ; for that teaches that all men are liable to eternal wo as soon as they come into the world ; more than that cannot be awarded in any case. But where punishment is equal, the guilt must be presumed so.

The phenomena of Habit, likewise, furnish us with an argument. By slow degrees, and the most gradual advances only, we become established in our moral habits. Here a virtue may be forsaken, and there a vice approached ; but such instances must occur often, before the indulgence can become habitual sin, and virtue be wholly renounced. There is a reluctance to be overcome at each stage of vice, as there is an effort to be made at each advance in improvement. But would a being whose nature is totally depraved, require much time to reconcile him to evil practice ? Could he shrink from sin in any shape ? Could he feel the least reluctance to enter the only appropriate, and therefore, it would seem, the only easy course of action for him ?

Look now at Education, Example, and all other great moral instruments ; their effects are infinitely diversified,

and incalculably great. But we shall find it hard to account for this, on the supposition that all men begin life with a settled character, and a bias toward evil so strong that divine power alone is sufficient to overcome it. Indeed, when external influence produces pernicious consequences, we know the subject affected, was not as bad before, as he was capable of becoming. And when they cause good results, we know the subject must have had a capacity for virtue.

VI. Lastly, *the Scriptures afford us a far different view of human nature from that presented by the doctrine we have attempted to refute.* They every where take it for granted, that a man is a sinner only through his own act and choice. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall *not* bear the iniquity of the father. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. Every tree is known by its *own* fruit. He that *committeth* sin, transgresseth the law. Know ye not that to whom ye yield *yourselves* servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness. He that doeth righteousness *is* righteous."

The sacred volume contains many severe *Rebukes* pointed at offenders. But rebuke is unjust where the offence could not be avoided, and is the consequence of something else, and not our own choice.

There are also numerous pathetic *Lamentations* and *Remonstrances* addressed in the name of God, to his erring creatures. "Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments. Turn ye, for why will ye die.

What could I have done more for my vineyard that I have not done. How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a bird gathereth her brood under her wings, and ye would not. O that thou hadst known! My people will not consider." Now such language as this, is mere mockery of human wo, unless it was by their own conduct, the guilt lamented, was incurred, and unless they had power to do otherwise. Why lament an evil which he himself had caused, by bringing them into the world with a depraved nature, and which, none but he, can ever cure? It is impossible to reconcile these expostulations with the idea, that, at any moment, the occasion might instantly have been removed by the divine power, and that without a special interposition on the part of God, there was no possibility of its removal. We ought to consider them as sincere; and if we do, we must conclude that the people concerned in them, had been the authors of their own ruin, and always possessed the ability to prevent it.

The Bible abounds with *Precepts*. For whom? A being, who, by his nature, is utterly unable to observe them?

The views of future *Retribution*, exhibited in the same volume, are so many contradictions to native depravity. We are taught that we shall be judged by our *deeds*. And they only, who have *done* evil, shall arise to condemnation. But what influence have our deeds upon that sentence, which was passed ages ago on the whole race, and by which we are "liable to the pains of hell?" The judgment is already completed, when we begin the race of life, and cannot be reversed by all we

may perform. Is this being rewarded according to our deeds ?

All men are represented, as alike interested in the blessings of Christianity, and its invitations are accordingly addressed to all with the same earnestness. Jesus knew what was in man, both our strength and our weakness. He was without guile. He ever spake the truth. If, then, these calls of divine goodness were not designed for every one's acceptance, or if none had power to comply with them, would he not have said so ? If our natural depravity be the origin and cause of all our actual offences, would he not have said so ? He might have lamented our blindness, but he could not have asked, " Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right ?" He might have been anxious for our unbelief, but could not have inquired, " Why do ye not believe ?" He might have exhorted us to wait patiently for the coming of the Holy Ghost, but could not have upbraided us for a guilt which that coming only could terminate. He might have expatiated on the miseries of our condition, but could not have held up the promises which concerned none but the elect, to a dying world ; thus adding fresh anguish to their helpless woes.

But we are *not* taught in the New Testament that our nature is depraved. Our Lord once exclaimed, " How *can* ye believe, who seek honour one of another," but never, " How *can* ye believe, who were altogether born in sins." He uniformily ascribes the ruin of the wicked to their own immediate fault, and not to any foreign cause, least of all to one prior to their existence. There are no words in the Bible, by which a bare statement of the

doctrine we oppose, can be made out, with even a shew of fairness. From a few passages, it has been extorted, however ; and the candid reader of Scripture, may justly express surprise at the manner in which a sentiment, so inconsistent with its whole spirit and instructions, has been drawn from it. As I have before observed, most of the passages relied upon in the argument, contain vivid and striking descriptions of the vices of particular men, communities, or generations. Some only declare the general truth, " There is no man that liveth and sinneth not." And scarce one can even by force, be made to allude to human nature itself, abstractly considered.

Three texts are cited always on this occasion ; and they are all which I shall now notice. Both because the mode of interpretation which applies to these, may apply to every other which is referred to, and because constant use of these, shews the dearth of good proof sufficiently to indicate the weakness of the cause they are supposed to establish.

One of these passages lies in the 51st Psalm. David is there giving utterance to some very strong emotions of his heart, excited by the recollections of his own crimes. The whole piece is an exercise of private, personal devotion, and should be interpreted as such. Shall we take up his words and analyse them, as if they were the language, not of emotion, but cold philosophy ? Shall we read his Psalm as a lecture, instead of an humble prayer of private penitence ? If any one supposes David designed to be understood literally, when he says, " I was shapen in iniquity," then let him be consistent, and equally literal in such sentences as the following ; " The

wicked go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." That is, infants speak as soon as they come into the world, and they speak lies too. "Rivers of water run down mine eyes." Here you may imagine his cheeks two channels or beds of rivers. "Purge me with hyssop." That is, take the herb hyssop and cleanse me. "Break the teeth of the young lions." "There is no soundness in my flesh, because of my sins." It is easily seen to what absurdities we are led by this mode of interpretaion; yet no reason exists for applying it to the words of the penitential hymn, which does not equally require its use in those just recited. The truth is, all these passages are properly regarded as the expressions, which naturally suggest themselves to the mind of an oriental poet, in a state of strong emotion; but not as literal representations of fact or opinion.

Ephesians ii. 3, is another text much relied upon in this argument. "And were, by nature, children of wrath, even as others." To whom is this said? To persons recently converted from *idolatry;* who had, in times past, "walked according to the prince of the power of the air, who were Gentiles in the flesh, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel." This heathenish state with its attendant vices, Paul contrasts with the condition into which Christianity had brought them. The phrase, "by nature" occurs in another Epistle, in a manner which illustrates its meaning here. "We, who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles." Now it is certain Paul does not intend their nature as human beings, for that is peculiar to no nation, and makes us simply *men*, not Jews nor Gentiles. The latter clause proves that

we are to understand the former thus, if any proof were needed. For sin, as an attribute of man, is surely not limited by national divisions, and the phrase "sinners of the Gentiles" would have no sense, if we did not know that, by this title, the Jews were accustomed to distinguish idolaters from their own people. To be a Jew by nature, is to be one by parentage, education, and affinity. "Children of wrath, children of disobedience," are terms significant of the actual character of those to whom they apply, a character acquired by themselves, when they "gave themselves over to lasciviousness, and walked according to the course of this world." So Peter styles similar characters, "cursed children," indicating their liability to punishment for their vices. And, in like manner, virtuous Christians walk as "children of the light." If any one prefers to understand the Apostle as affirming that the Ephesians were proper subjects of divine wrath, on account of their birth simply, without any regard to their own subsequent conduct, he may enjoy his opinion. But he turns aside entirely from the argument of the writer, to hang a fond notion of his own upon the naked words.

The only remaining passage I shall notice, lies in the Epistle to the Corinthians. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God." A wrong translation alone, occasions the least mistake here. The Greek word does not signify what the English term implies. Its true meaning is expressed in Jude xix, "sensual." So also in James iii. 15, "sensual" is the rendering. It is found in three places in this Epistle besides the passage just quoted. Paul, speaking of the human frame, says,

it is "sown an atural body." He means "a fleshly body." This expresses his sentiment more clearly; for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom." The Apostle, in the chapter containing the words under discussion, declares, respecting the future happiness of the good, that "eye hath not seen the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, but God hath revealed them unto us by his spirit." In reference to the same things, he afterwards says, the natural or sensual man, he who is immersed in sensual indulgences, receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; that is, the things which he hath revealed unto us by his Spirit. "They are foolishness unto him." Why? Because spiritual joys, the bliss of virtue, has no charms for the sensualist. "Neither can he know them." Why? "Because they are spiritually discerned." They are of a purely intellectual and spiritual nature; they are not to be understood, or valued by one whose gross mind is bound to the earth, and who has never experienced a felicity which has no relation to the gratifications of sense. His moral perceptions and taste, are blunted, obscure, perverse. He sees no attractions in the prospect of a happiness, whose nature he cannot comprehend,—whose worth he is incapable of appreciating. Let his mind be spiritualized—let it be restored to purity and virtue, he will then discern spiritual things.

Before I close this protracted discussion, allow me for a moment to advert to some popular charges, brought against those who adopt our views of the subject we have been considering.

1. It is often alleged that we diminish the evil of sin, make it a trifling matter, and are disposed to think most men good enough as they are. But how does this appear? Our argument concerns a false account of the origin, and a very exaggerated statement of the amount of sin among mankind. We leave room for the whole mass of facts which have been, or may be gathered out of human history, to prove that a man is a sinner, and a great sinner too. But we stand in front of these facts, and beg our opponents not to add to them a pile of their fanciful creation. We think that there is as much danger of overstating in a case of this kind, as there is where only an individual's reputation is concerned. We desire only to have the *whole* truth told. And beside the dark picture of guilt, we would hang that of virtue, and point to the one as well as to the other, when we are describing man. It surely does not affect the *magnitude* of any evil to trace it to one, rather than another *source*. Or if it does, the evil of sin is enhanced by a doctrine which attributes it to every man's own folly, and perverse abuse of his nature, instead of deriving it from that nature itself, which, being a gift of God, ought to be presumed worthy of the giver. We do not make sin an *infinite* evil, for the same reason that our opponents do not make virtuous qualities infinite. There *can* be nothing infinite in a *finite* being. We do not deny that there is much wickedness among men; we believe that the whole world once "lay in wickedness." But we are unwilling, for the sake of accounting for this amount of guilt, to resort to a theory which makes God its author. No man, in his right mind, can regard sin as

a "trifle." We believe every form of it a subject of great sorrow. With intense anxiety have we seen the mad course of the ungodly, and we lift up our voices with our brethren, to entreat them to fly from the wrath to come. And we can do this with more consistency, for our peculiar views of the point in question. Not sheltering ourselves under the broad covering of native, hereditary, *given* corruption, we are compelled to feel more earnestly the danger to which we have exposed ourselves by our acquired guilt. We look at sin as it is exhibited in the individual transgressor, and are thus assisted in our efforts to impress its evil on our hearts, and fill them with apprehension at the thought of partaking it. All excuse is taken away, where each one is represented as the author of his own ruin.

The standard of Christian holiness is common to all Christians. We compare men with Jesus, and the precepts of Jesus. Thus we judge of their virtues, and their depravity. This can hardly produce the fault of thinking the majority good enough as they are. None are good enough; Regenerate or Unregenerate, we all come far short of the mark of our high calling. It is not always they who most decry the virtue of mankind, that most justly appreciate their sins, or feel the most solicitude for their improvement.

2. It is also alleged that we take away the proper ground of *humility*. In reply, I need only remind you of a well known principle. That which we possess in common with every body else, never makes us proud. So that which we suppose all the world has as well as we, never causes the feeling of humility. You are not proud

because you are a rational animal. You are not humble, because you are no angel; you may be proud of that which raises you above others, and humbled by that which sinks you in their esteem. If human nature be depraved, yet it is no more so in one, than all; and therefore, I believe few would venture to assert, that they are humbled by the thought of native depravity alone. No: humility is a just sense of our *own* imperfections and unworthiness; and he will have the most of it, who compares, most faithfully, his heart and life, with the characters which deserve admiration, and perceives his want of resemblance; who studies his duty well, and understands the defects in his performance of it. We are not disposed to boast of our humility; but there is nothing in our opinions which destroy it. There *is* a spiritual pride whose appropriate food is sought in rehearsing to others, the corruptions it really does not feel ashamed of; and bemoaning a guilt, the charge of which, it would resent, should it come from another's lips.

3. Again, we are accused of undervaluing "the great Salvation" by our views of human nature; but just the opposite is true. It is for the very reason that we think as we do of our nature, that we are disposed to set a high value on the Christian scheme of mercy. We feel that by our sins, we have done a wrong to ourselves, the most mournful and dangerous. We compare the nature God has given us, which is "but a little lower than the angels," with our own conduct, and confess that we deserve a heavy punishment for so degrading it. We look up to the bright eminence, from which the sinner falls, and bless more earnestly the hand which lifts him from

the dust, and leads him back to virtue and to God. We welcome the Saviour, who comes to restore self-ruined men. But did we believe that God gave us at first, a ruined nature, and sent us helpless and abandoned into the waste, howling wilderness, with no capacity to do good, and condemned to woes eternal for doing evil, we should not value highly the grace which afterward calls home a few of us, leaving all besides, to perish without relief. We do not, and we cannot feel grateful for a Gospel made up of decrees of Election, irresistible influences, and eternal death. But we rejoice, yea, and will rejoice, in that Gospel of the blessed God, which reveals a Saviour to the world, and opening wide the gates of Heaven, proclaims the soul-cheering words, "Whosoever will, let him come." We do, and we will give thanks to the Father of Jesus, and of us, that he sent his Son to turn us from our iniquities, reconcile us to himself, and, by forming us to virtue here, prepare us, for a holy rest hereafter.

Brethren, while we divert your attention from false views of human nature, and strive to banish them from your minds, we still call upon you to look steadfastly to the characters you have yourselves acquired. If, for the sin of our first father, we be neither guilty nor exposed to punishment, for our own, we most assuredly are. May God incline our hearts to repentance, cherish in us every good desire and affection, fill us with the love of his own perfections, and give us fervent charity toward all mankind!

A

LETTER

ON

THE PRINCIPLES

OF THE

MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE.

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LETTER.

To

The Executive Committee of the

American Unitarian Association.

Gentlemen,

Debarred as I am at present, from the exercises of the pulpit, by the feeble state of my health, and greatly solicitous for the success of that appeal, which has recently been made to unitarian christians, for the cause of christianity in India, I would ask for permission, through you, to address a few thoughts to the members of your Association, upon *the principles of the foreign missionary enterprise.* There have long been, and still are, as I think, both great vagueness, and great extravagance of language upon this subject, alike among the friends and the opposers of the cause of foreign missions. Some of our orthodox brethren have taken the ground, that all the heathen, merely as such, are condemned to endless, and to irremediable misery, unless indeed they shall be converted to christianity; a doctrine from which unitarians turn with horror; and others of them, in advocating the enterprise, in their care to use terms less objectionable, have employed those only which are too indefinite to bring home a strong sense of its obligation to any mind, which was not previously dis-

posed to engage in it. And most unitarians, resting on the principles, that men will be judged according to what they have, and not according to what they have not; and that, when God will have any section of the heathen world to be enlightened by christianity, he will himself indicate his purpose, and provide the means for its accomplishment, have either thought but little upon the subject, or have waited for very distinct instructions respecting their duty in the service. A new era, however, seems now to have begun among unitarians, on the question of the duty of christians to unite in the work of extending the knowledge, and the influences of our religion. The primary objects for which your Association was formed, I know, were "to diffuse the knowledge, and to promote the interests, of pure christianity *throughout our country*." But I observed that at the annual meeting of the Association, a resolution was unanimously passed, "that this Association views with high gratification the prospect, which is opened of a more extended mutual acquaintance and cooperation among unitarian christians throughout the world." This shows that your thoughts have been directed to the situation of other lands, and the extent and activity of your operations recommend an address to you in preference to any other mode of communicating my views to those whom I am desirous to reach. I hope, therefore, that, as my attention has been for sometime employed on this subject, I may, without exposure to the imputation of arrogance, call the attention of unitarian christians among us to the general,—the original question, in regard to foreign missions. This is a question, which, I think, has not yet

obtained the attention, which it claims from us; and a fair and full consideration of which, it seems to me, can hardly fail to bring christians of every name, to a cordial cooperation in every well devised scheme, for the greatest possible extension of the privileges, and the blessings of christianity.

I would then propose to the members of the American Unitarian Association, and to all unitarian christians, the inquiries, *the missionary spirit, what is it? What are its principles?* Are they, or are they not among the essential principles of our religion? Are they or are they not the principles by which our Lord and his apostles were actuated? Does the cause, or does it not, demand the sympathy, the earnestness, and the aid of every christian?

I am aware that there are those, and they are probably not few, who will not at once be disposed to view the missionary enterprise, as we now see it, as essentially the very enterprise of our Lord and his apostles. I know, too, that are those who consider the missionary spirit, as often as they hear of it, but as one of the many forms, which an ungoverned religious enthusiasm assumes, and that there are those also, who are accustomed to view it even more unfavourably; and but as one of the forms, which are assumed by ambition, or by avarice, for mere party, selfish, or worldly objects. There are those, who will meet our first suggestion of this subject with the inquiries, "have not the heathen as good a right to their religion, as you have to yours? Is not their religion as dear to them, as yours is to you? Are they not as sincere believers as you are; and will not God accept them in their sincerity?" We shall be asked, "what injury

results to you from the faith, or practices of the heathen world? Or, who has commissioned you to quench the fire of their sacrifices, and to overthrow their altars? Think you, that they will be cast out from the presence and favour of God, in the life to come, because they know not him of whom they have never heard; or that, at the bar of heaven they will be tried by a law, which they have never had an opportunity to know? Are they not as happy in their faith as you are in yours; and, if God intends their conversion to christianity, will he not himself bring them to the faith of the gospel?"—These are inquiries which are abroad, and which are to be fairly met. They involve objections to the missionary cause, which ought to be fairly answered. They may be, and they are, proposed by mere cavillers; by men who care not for religion in any form; and who would advocate, or oppose any thing, by which they may either justify their own irreligion, or thwart, and vex those, who, they think, are mere pretenders to more religion than they have themselves. But they are made, too, by men, whom they restrain from sympathy in the missionary cause, only because it has not been viewed by them in all its bearings, and obligations. They are made by men, who have been disgusted with the cause, or at least have been rendered averse from it, by the overcharged statements that have been made in defence of it; by the injudicious manner in which it has often been conducted; by the means which have been employed in its support; by the spirit and manner of some of its agents; and, by what has been thought to be the waste of treasure that has been made, in most ostentatiously doing *nothing*. Let us then meet these inquiries, as the objections of fair minds;

and answer them, by an appeal to principles, which fair minds will readily acknowledge. In other words, let us follow back the missionary enterprise into its essential principles. Let us consider the subject, not as belonging to one or another of the parties of christendom, but, purely as one belonging to our common interests, and duties, as disciples of Christ. Let it even be forgotten, if it may be, that any missionary efforts are now making; that any missionary societies are now existing; and let us dispassionately consider the enterprise, as a subject for speculation; as a question upon which we are to determine, what is our duty as christians? If it be not a work, which God will have us to do, the sooner it comes to nought, the better. But if it be his will that we engage in it, let us not oppose it, lest haply we be found to fight against God.

I resume, then, the inquiry, *the missionary spirit,—what is it? what are its principles?*

I answer, the *first* principle of a missionary spirit, or a spirit which is earnest in the cause of diffusing the knowledge and influence of our religion,—is, *a christian sense of the moral and religious condition of those, who are living under the influences of heathenism, and of false religion.*

The question arises, what is a christian sense of the religious and moral condition of those, who are living under the influences of heathenism, and of false religion?

I know of but one way, in which we can obtain a satisfactory answer to this inquiry; or, an answer to it, with which we ought to be satisfied; and that is, by endeavouring as well as we may, to see the world, to the

extent to which it is unenlightened by our religion, as our Lord and his Apostles saw it ; to see the religious and moral condition of our fellow creatures, who are unblessed with christianity, as it is exposed to us in the light of the will and purposes of God, in regard to the world, as they are made known to us in the New Testament. No one,—I mean, no sincere believer in Christ,—can doubt whether he ought to view those who are without the pale of christianity, as our religion itself views them ; or whether we ought to feel, to cherish, and to exercise towards them, the sentiments which our religion expresses in regard to them. What, then, are the views and sentiments of our religion, in respect to the heathen world, and to all who are without the knowledge of Christ ?

I say not, for christianity does not say, that among the heathen, and the believers of a false religion, none are virtuous. There were in the time of our Lord, and there are now, virtuous and good men under every form of religion in the world. Nor do I say, for our religion does not say, that the offerers of a false worship, as far as this worship is offered in simplicity, and sincerity of heart, are not accepted by God. I have not a doubt upon the question, whether they are accepted by him. I believe, for I think that our religion teaches us, that in every nation, he that fears God, according to the best conceptions which he has of him, and does righteousness, as far as he understands the law of righteousness, is spiritually a child of God, and will not fail of a part in the inheritance of the children of God. And I further believe, and doubt not, that no one who has lived, or who

will live, from the necessity of his condition, ignorant of the true God, in false religion, and in an idolatrous worship, will at last be condemned, because he knew not what he could not know; and did not, what he had not the means of understanding that it was his duty to do. These, I hope, will be considered as ample concessions.* But, with all these concessions distinctly before us, let us view the heathen world,—the world that is without christianity,—as our religion views it, and as it actually is. I would not, if I could, excite a false, an artificial sympathy, in the cause of missions. Christianity needs no plotting, no trick, no concealment, no overcharged representations, for the accomplishment of any of its purposes. But let us not shut our eyes against the truth.

* I here quote with pleasure the sentiments of Macknight upon the question of the salvation of heathens. I do not know any other writer, of those who are called orthodox, who has treated this subject with equal liberality of feeling. "That the pious heathens should have their faith counted to them for righteousness at the judgment, notwithstanding it may have been deficient in many particulars, and even erroneous, is not unreasonable; provided in these instances of error, they have used their best endeavours to know the truth, and have not been led by these errors into habitual sin.***For it can no longer be pretended, that by making faith the means of salvation, the gospel hath consigned all the heathens to damnation. Neither can God be accused of partiality, in conferring the benefit of revelation upon so small a portion of the human race, in the false notion, that the actual knowledge of revelation is necessary to salvation. For although the number of those who have lived without revelation, hath hitherto been much greater than of those who have enjoyed that benefit, no unrighteousness can be imputed to God, since he hath not excluded those from salvation, who have been denied revelation." Translation of the Apostolical Epistles, vol. 1. pp. 197—201.

Let us not view heathenism, and false religion, only as they are seen in the characters of a few individuals, who stand out in most honorable prominence, in the picture which has come down to us of their age ; and who, against every adverse influence, were illustrious as models of a piety and virtue, which would have made them worthy of honour in any age. Nor let us determine the character of heathenism, and of false religion, by considering them as they are manifested merely in their gorgeous shows ; in their pomp and splendour ; or, as they are sometimes brought before us, in their most simple and harmless rites. They have other features, which are the indices of another character. They have other principles, and interests, and ends, that are to be seen in a casual glance at them ; other practices and consequences, which open to us very different views of their nature and character ; and which are suited to excite a corresponding difference of sentiment, in regard to those who are under their influence. Let us, then, view them in the light in which they are brought before us by the sentiments, the feelings, and conduct, of Christ and his apostles, in regard to them.

In this aspect of the subject, I would say that, even if there were not to be found in the records of our religion any clear and expressions of its sentiments in respect to the heathen, and to all to whom a knowledge of it has not been imparted, it still would not be doubtful what are these sentiments ; and what are the feelings with which *we* should view the world, which is without the knowledge of Christ. Take only the *conduct* of our Lord and of his apostles, their labours, and their suffer-

ings even to death, in the cause of extending and establishing our religion; in the cause of opposing, and of exterminating error, superstition and sin; in the cause of rescuing men from the delusion, and the debasement, of idolatry and of all false worship; and who that believes that christianity is a dispensation from God, can doubt whether the rescue of men from this delusion, and this debasement,—whether the recovery of heathens, and of those who are living under the influences of false religion, from their errors, superstitions and sins, was in itself a cause as great and important, as essential to human good and to human happiness, as this plan in the divine economy, and these toils, and privations, and sufferings for its accomplishment, were themselves great and peculiar? Let us conceive, as distinctly as we can, of the character of our Lord. Let us bring him before our minds, as he is brought before us in the New Testament, as the Son of God; the long promised Messiah, and Saviour, whom the Father had sanctified and sent into the world, for the express end, "that the world through him, might be saved." Let us bring him before our minds, associated, as he is throughout the New Testament, in his mission, and life, and death, if I may so express myself, with the deep interest of God himself, in the cause of suppressing every where idolatry, and false religion; and of recovering men from the degradation, the vices and crimes, to which ignorance of himself, and superstition had brought them. Let us conceive of this most exalted, this most holy of all the messengers of God, laboring daily, and daily suffering, that he might bring men to the truth, and sanctify them by the truth; enduring the scoffs, the insults, the artifices, and the perse-

cutions of those, whom he came "to save, and to bless, by turning them from their iniquities unto God;" and at last, in the cause of that salvation which he preached, and for which alone he lived, "humbling himself to death, even the death of the cross." Let us hear him, when he sends forth his apostles to preach the gospel to every creature, saying to them, "he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved, and he that believeth not, shall be condemned;" and let us follow these apostles, who have given up every thing of this world, that they might preach every where "the unsearchable riches of Christ," as they spread themselves through Syria, Phenicia, the populous provinces of Asia Minor, and of Macedonia and Greece, comprehending the cities of Antioch, of Lystra and Derbe, of Thessalonica and Philippi, of Corinth and Ephesus, of Athens and Rome; and, if we should believe tradition, visiting even Spain, and the shores of Gaul and Britain. Like their master, they are willing to spend, and to be spent, in the work; and they "account all things to be but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ;" for the privilege, as widely as possible, of extending it over the earth; and, like their Master, every one of them dies in the cause; and most of them, the victims of their fidelity in it. Suppose, then, that our religion had not given to us any very definite expressions of the religious and moral state of those, who were living in heathenism, and false religion. Must not their condition, I would ask, have been most deplorable, to have excited this sympathy, this interest, stronger than death, in their recovery; to have led to this wonderful plan, in God's moral providence, and to these

wonderful means, for their rescue, their salvation? And, can it be a question, what is the interest, the earnestness, which we should feel, in the cause of diffusing the knowledge, the spirit, and the blessings of our religion?

But the language of our Lord and of his apostles, in reference to the religious and moral condition of those who are without the gospel, is not equivocal. Interpreted as they should be, by the import which his own, and the conduct of his apostles have given to them, the expressions, surely, are full of most solemn and affecting meaning, "the Son of man came, to seek, and to save, that which was lost." Again, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life; for, God sent not his Son into the world, to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." Again; "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Again; "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me, may not abide in darkness, but may have the light of life." And, in conformity with this language, the apostle of the Gentiles represents them as "without God in the world," and without any rational hope. He says to them, "ye were darkness; but now are ye light in the Lord." "Ye were afar off;" but now are "made nigh by the blood of Christ." But instead of quoting detached expressions on this subject, let me refer any one, who would conceive rightly of it, to the three first chapters of the epistle to the Romans. Here is a picture of degradation, of sin and misery, which will prepare any

one, who has read the evangelists with any serious attention, for the inference of the author of this epistle, "We have proved both of Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." Our Lord, indeed, uttered no denunciations against the mere offerers of a false worship; nor did his apostles, great as was their zeal for the conversion of men, pronounce anathemas against them, merely as idolaters. But our religion contemplates idolatry, and all false religion, even in their best state, and least corrupting influence, as a delusion, from which God in his mercy would rescue those who are living under them. It also brings idolatry and false religion before us, as the history of all time represents them, as the prolific mothers of all the vices and crimes, that can debase our nature and disqualify for heaven. In the view of Christ and his apostles, the world was worshipping, "they knew not what." Men were not only in darkness, but were "loving darkness better than light, because their deeds were evil." They were immortal beings; yet "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that was in them;" "given up to uncleanness, and to vile affections;" degraded from the condition, and lost to the purposes, for which God designed them. Let it be admitted then, that there were those, both among Jews and Gentiles, who, before they had heard the teaching of our Lord and of his apostles, were prepared to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. Still, the records of the evangelists, of the apostles, and of profane history, alike assure us, that offences both against piety and virtue, which are not to be named

among christians, were not only established by usage, but were sanctioned by all the authority, which the opinion and example of the master spirits of the age could give to them. We do not violate charity, when we say of the decidedly virtuous heathen in the time of our Lord, that they were *few;* that they shone as stars, appearing here and there in a night, when heavy and black clouds had gathered, and were rolling tumultuously through the air, accumulating in their progress new elements of a storm, which was threatening to burst with tremendous violence upon the earth. And I would ask, has any important change, since that time, been made in the character of heathenism, and of false religion? If not, what should be our sentiments of them? And, what are our obligations in regard to those, who know not God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent?

"While Paul waited at Athens," as we are told, "his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given up to idolatry." This translation of the words of the evangelist, however, expresses but feebly the emotions, which were excited in the mind of the apostle, when he saw every where about him the images, that were worshipped by the Athenians. So zealous, indeed, as is well known, were the Greeks, and especially the Athenians, for this species of worship, that, not satisfied with the number of deities, which had come down to them from their fathers, they not only often consecrated new ones of their own invention, but freely adopted also the gods of other nations. Nay, so careful were they not to omit the acknowledgment of any divine power, whether celestial, terrestrial, or infernal, which they even

suspected might claim their homage, that they erected altars to unknown gods; until they had no less than thirty thousand objects of worship.* Paul, therefore, saw the city, not only given up wholly to idolatry, but full of the images of the gods of Greece. He saw the city, the most renowned in the world for the triumphs of art, the most splendid on the earth in its temples, the proudest in its schools of philosophy; the city to which even imperial Rome sent the most distinguished of its youth, to train them for the forum, and to qualify them to be instructers at home, filled with idols. He saw the city, which was the centre of the learning of the world, lying in the darkness of utter ignorance of the one true God. He saw the human mind, there, at once exalted by every earthly attainment, and depraved and debased, by the most licentious and corrupt superstition. He saw those immortal beings prostituting the highest powers of their nature to the lowest and vilest services; and dishonoring alike themselves, and God their maker. Not only, therefore, was his spirit "stirred within him;" but his was at once, a mingled emotion of indignation against those, who, "professing themselves to be wise," had closed their minds against the knowledge of God, and were blind leaders of the blind; of pity towards the miserably deluded multitude; of zeal for the cause of God and of human nature; and of earnestness for the reformation, and the salvation of men, so lost in ignorance and sin. It was the excitement of a mind, which was enlightened and sanctified by christian conceptions of God, and by christian senti-

* Robinson's Archæologia Græca, p. 195

ments of the worship and duty, which man owes to his Maker. It was the action of a mind, under the influence of christian views of the condition of man, while yet in idolatry and sin ; and of the designs of God in regard to the world, by his Son Jesus Christ. It was the movement of a mind, which felt the infinite worth of the religion of Christ ; which felt an unquenchable zeal for the extension of its blessings ; and which could not be satisfied with itself, while any thing was neglected, that could be done to reform, and to save the world. We have, indeed, no reason to suppose, that Paul was more strongly affected by the spectacle of idols and of idolatry at Athens, than he was at Rome, or at Corinth, or at Ephesus, or at Thessalonica ; or than he was at any place, in which he witnessed the triumph of a false, and a debasing worship, and the corruption of heart and manners that are associated with it. We have here but the incidental expression of a feeling, or rather, of a state of mind, with which he every where, and at all times, looked upon the heathen world. He had been sent forth, like the other apostles, " to preach the gospel to every creature ;" to call men, " every where, to repent, and to turn to God ; to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light ;" and every where to establish the worship and service of the one God, " through the one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." And, in this cause, he had made the greatest personal sacrifices to which man could be called ; and had endured all that man could sustain. I need not enter into a detail of his journeyings, of his labours, and of the persecutions which he suffered, while, with unimpaired fortitude and resolu-

tion, he ceased not, in the city and the country, on the land and on the sea, while at liberty and while in chains, by conversation, by preaching and by his letters, to do all that man could do, to reclaim his fellow-men from idolatry and sin, to the faith of Christ; to the knowledge, and love, and worship of God; and to holiness here, in preparation for immortal happiness hereafter. We all know that, in this work Paul persisted against all obstacles, and under every accumulation of suffering, untired, and undiscouraged; and that, like his master, he gloriously terminated his life and his toils together in the cause.—I would then ask any one, who is opposed to the missionary cause, or who is indifferent concerning it, here to pause and seriously to consider, whence was this sympathy of Paul in the moral condition of the heathen world? Was it unreasonable? Was it excessive? Were his efforts, or his sacrifices, beyond the fair demands, or the true importance, of the object? Or, did he in truth feel no more for this cause, than ought to be felt for it by every christian?

The true view of heathenism is, not that it is a condition, in which, if a man die, he is therefore necessarily under eternal condemnation. Terrible thought; and most dishonourable alike to God, and to christianity! But, still, that it is a condition of darkness, of sin, and wretchedness, from which it is God's purpose to redeem the world. Paul saw not, nor did any of the apostles see, in the heathen world, men who were doomed to endless perdition, only because they were pagans. But he saw in them the human nature degraded and debased; and his was a deep, and

strong feeling of the greatness of the change, in character, in condition, and in happiness, which a cordial reception of christianity would bring to them. He saw in them men, who were groping their way, they knew not whither; and who were sinking deeper in moral turpitude by the very efforts, the very services, to which their false and debasing conceptions of religion were leading them. He saw the moral image of God in the soul to be marred and defiled; and he saw, and felt that, by the religion of Christ alone, its beauty and its purity could be restored. In these sentiments, and these feelings, is the first element of the missionary spirit; or, of a spirit alive to the cause of the greatest practicable extension of the gospel of Christ. Although, as a Jew, he had from his childhood known and worshipped God, yet, as a Jew, Paul had felt no interest in the cause of extending a knowledge of God to the heathen. But christianity had given to him new conceptions of the character and designs of God; and new views of the condition of man, while living in ignorance of God, and in sin. And if we see our fellow creatures in the darkness, and debasement, and misery of superstition, idolatry and crime, and have none of the sympathy with their condition which Paul felt, and none of the interest which our religion breathes from every page of its records, in the cause of their deliverance, their redemption, have we the spirit of the disciples of Christ? or, are we christians?

Different views are taken of heathenism, and of false religion, and very different sentiments are excited in regard to them, far less from the actual diversity of their

character,—although, indeed, it differs greatly in different places,—than from the diversity of the state of mind in which it is contemplated by men. An infidel has told us, that "the religion of the pagans consisted alone in morality and festivals; in morality, which is common to men in all ages and countries; and in festivals, which were no other than seasons of rejoicing, and which could bring with them no injury to mankind."* And with a merely speculative christian, by whom religion is regarded only as a matter of opinion,—a subject for occasional discussion, the pagan idolatry was, and is, a mere speculative absurdity. With those who view religion only as a political engine, paganism, and all religion, is good or bad, at it is favourable or unfavourable, to their views of civil policy. And by those who care little or nothing for the religion in which they have been educated, in any of its forms, or of its characteristic sentiments, no interest whatever will of course be felt, in the religious or moral condition of the world. But neither did our Lord nor his apostles, look upon heathenism with indifference; nor alone, nor peculiarly in its political bearings; nor as a mere error of judgment; nor as an innocent, or a moral institution. No. Had our Lord and his apostles reasoned of the world, as too many now reason of those who are without the knowledge of God, and the blessings of his gospel; had they said, "the time has not come to bring Jews and heathens to the knowledge of the truth. They are not qualified to receive it. God will execute his own work, in his own time. They are safe. They will be judged in equity, and in mercy.

* Voltaire's Louis XIV.

Why then interfere, where our interference is not requested?"—Had our Lord and his apostles thus reasoned of the world, what would now have been our condition? How much better than that of the ancient idolaters of Athens, or of Rome; or the modern idolaters of Hindoostan, or of China? Let impartial justice preside over the inquiry, and I have no fear concerning the decision upon it in every mind.

May I not then say to you, reader, whoever you may be, cultivate a Christian sense of the religious and moral condition of those, who are living under the influences of heathenism, and of false religion, and, like Paul's, your spirit will be "stirred in you," when you look upon the nations that are "wholly given up to idolatry?" Yes, carry with you into those dark regions of the earth, the light and spirit of the gospel of Christ, and your heart will "burn within you," with compassion for their miserable condition, and with christian zeal in the cause of their deliverance from it. What, indeed, is there, that is low, what that is vicious, or what that is wretched, which was not comprehended in ancient, and which is not comprehended in modern, heathenism? There is nothing to be conceived either of lewdness, or of cruelty, which had not the sanctions of the religion of Greece and Rome; and which is not now a part of the idolatrous worship of the world. Nor, in any section of the world, was moral instruction ever connected with any department, or office, of heathen worship. Nay, more. This worship, with the vices that were not only incidental to it, but which found, in some of its exercises, their very spirit and life, was not left, even in the most cultivated ages of antiqui-

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ty, *alone* to exert its full influence upon the multitude. Even legislators and philosophers, instead of endeavouring to instruct, and to reclaim their ignorant and corrupted countrymen, encouraged this degrading service by their teaching, required it by their laws, and sanctioned it by their examples. I ask only, then, that the world which is without our religion, should be seen by us in the light, and considered with the sentiments, with which it was seen and considered by our Lord and his Apostles; and we shall be secure of the first element, or principle, of that spirit, which will earnestly desire, and gladly seize the occasion, as widely as possible to diffuse the knowledge, and influence, of the truth as it is in Jesus.

The *second* element, or principle, of that spirit, which feels its obligation to do all that it may for the diffusion of our religion, is, *a deep and strong sense of the reality, and power, and worth of our religion; and of the inestimable blessings which it will not fail to impart to those, who shall cordially receive, and faithfully obey it.*

I have dwelt, perhaps, longer than it may be thought by many to have been necessary that I should have dwelt, on the sentiments with which our religion regards the heathen world. But I know that there are not a few, even of those who have made some progress in religious knowledge, whose opinions on this subject are unformed and unsettled; and that there are not a few also, who reason, as I think, most unjustly concerning it. I was willing, also, to detain attention for a few minutes longer than I would otherwise have done, upon the first element, or principle, of the missionary enterprise, from a conviction that, if this principle be distinctly understood,

and strongly felt, a preparation will be secured for the succeeding topics of this letter. These topics I will now treat as briefly as I can.

Is our religion, then, *a reality?* Are its doctrines respecting the character and government of God, respecting the condition of man in this world, respecting our Lord Jesus Christ, and the eternal life that is beyond the grave, actually a revelation from God to us? I appeal, then, to the consciousness which the Christian has of the power, and the worth of his religion. I appeal to his experience of its purifying, its heavenly influence, upon the heart that receives, and loves it, and yields to it. I appeal to his experience of its adaptation to the strongest wants of his nature; to the wants of his immortal nature; to his experience of its power of exalting the soul above all that would degrade and debase it; of bringing man to the greatest nearness to God, to which he can be brought in this world; and of giving, even here, a foretaste of the blessedness, which it assures to its obedient believers hereafter.

Who that thus knows the power and the worth of the religion of Christ, will not most earnestly, most solicitously desire its widest, its universal extension? We may possess knowledge, and riches, and other sources of great immediate gratification, and be strongly sensible of their worth, and yet not only not desire their diffusion, but even feel our own interest and happiness essentially to depend upon the very fact, of our exclusive possession of them. But so it cannot be in regard to the principles and the spirit of the religion of Christ. In each one of its principles, and in every object of it, Christianity is

stamped with a character of *universality,* which belongs to no other religion; and, corresponding with this peculiarity of it, is the spirit which it awakens in its sincere believers. Christian benevolence, the love which Christianity inspires, is a principle that cannot lie inactive in the soul that receives it. It will even expand itself beyond the sphere of its capacity of action. It will wish, and it will pray for, the amelioration of the suffering, to which it can extend only the emotions, and the breathings, of its compassionate desires. It will wish, and it will pray for, the universal diffusion of truth, and purity, and happiness. Nor will it evaporate in a wish; or think that its end is attained, only by a prayer for the good of all men. It will not indeed waste itself on the expanse of ignorance, and weakness, and suffering, and sin; or spend its strength, where it can impart no light, or comfort, or improvement. But while it diffuses itself, like that subtile, elastic, all pervading fluid, which surrounds and fills our earth, and is the life of every living thing, it will ever delight to *concentrate its power;* and here, and there, and every where, as it may, to accomplish the greatest good of which it is capable. Christian benevolence will never hesitate upon the question, whether it *shall* act, wherever it *may* act, for the good of others. It can no more live without this action, than the selfish principle can live without action for its own indulgence. Do I, then, address those who have a Christian sense of the reality, and power, and worth of our religion? With them, the knowledge of an opportunity, and the possession of the means, of more widely extending it, will at once secure all that christian earnestness, and that christian benevolence, can accomplish in this enterprise.

In thinking of the early extension of our religion,—the unexampled rapidity of its extension during the life of the apostles ; and in pursuing the inquiries, " why has it not since been more widely diffused ? Why has it not long ago penetrated into every region, where civil government is established, and the arts of civilized life are cultivated, and where men are qualified to weigh the evidences of its truth ? and, why has it not overshadowed, and withered the superstitious, and exterminated the false religion, and the idolatries, of Turkey, of Persia, of Hindoostan, and of the vast empire of China ? Why has it not yet spread through Africa, and through South America ; why has it not accomplished in the islands of the Indian ocean, and in all those of the Pacific, the good which it is said recently to have accomplished in the Society isles ?"*—In thus comparing what our religion has

* In the year 1773, Capt. Cook estimated the number of inhabitants in the Society Islands at 200,000. The missionaries think that there must have been, at that time, at least 150,000. But in 1797, when the missionaries arrived there, the number did not exceed 20,000 ; and before christianity began to exert much influence there, the number had diminished to little more than 15,000. It is believed that two thirds of the children that were born, were sacrificed to idols ; or were thrown into the sea to propitiate the sharks, which were worshipped as gods ; or were buried alive. In the years 1801 and 1802, Mr John Turnbull resided at Otaheite for commercial purposes ; and has since published " A Voyage round the World, in the years 1800, 1, 2, 3, and 4." Of the inhabitants of these islands, he says, " their pollution beggars all description ; and my mind revolts from a recollection, which recalls so many objects of disgust and horror. Their wickedness is enough to call down the immediate judgment of heaven ; and unless their manners change, I pronounce that they will not long

done, with what we are very plainly taught that it was intended to do, we too easily rest in causes of its past, and present condition, which leave the blame of the narrowness of the present bounds of Christendom any where, but where indeed it belongs; that is, with those who have called themselves christians. It is said too, in our own justification, that the age of miracles has passed; and that converts are not therefore now to be made, as they were made in the days of the apostles. And then we resort to the consideration, that there is work enough to be done at home, without going abroad to proselyte. And, if still pressed upon the subject, we ask, "where,

remain in the number of nations." *Now*, however, not less than 12,000, in these islands, can read the word of God intelligibly; considerable portions of which have been translated into their language, printed, and circulated. Three thousand children and adults are now in the school. Many are able to write, and some are considerably acquainted with arithmetic. The pleasures of the domestic circle are now known among them. Industry has increased. Drunkenness has become rare. Theft seldom occurs; and murder is still more unfrequent. The aged and infirm are kindly treated. Hospitals have been established; and charitable societies instituted, to relieve the afflicted poor. Their government is defined, and limited by a constitution; and the king and his chiefs have power only to execute the laws. Their wars are ended, and the weapons of war are perishing. Family prayer is almost universal. Twenty eight houses of worship are opened on the Sabbath, and eighteen natives are employed as missionaries in the neighbouring islands. These are facts which require no comment. It would be easy to adduce many others, in regard to these islanders, which are not less interesting. But I would rather refer the reader, who would know more of this subject, to the London Quarterly Chronicle for July and October, 1823; and to the Missionary Herald for September, 1825.

and what, are the indications of providence, that our labours in the work of extending our religion among the heathen will be successful?" But I would ask any one who so reasons concerning the missionary cause, to bring home to himself the inquiry, as far as respects the intellectual and moral condition of the world, "what better indications had our Lord and his apostles, of success in the work of diffusing his religion, than we now have?" I may ask, too, even at the hazard of startling those who have not so viewed it, if our religion be not, essentially, a religion of proselytism? Are not its designs respecting all mankind forcing themselves upon our notice, on every page of its records? Does it offer any compromise with false religion, or with idolatry, in any of their forms? Nay, more, I would ask, if christianity is to be extended over the whole world, and if the age of miracles be gone by, not to return, where is the consistency of waiting for a miraculous direction in this work, and for miraculous assistance in its execution? Shall *we* then wait for miraculous manifestations, to excite us to do what we may for its universal extension? The only miracle, indeed, which is necessary for our success, in the enterprise is, that they who call themselves christians, should strongly feel the power and worth of the religion of Christ; and, that their hearts should be drawn out in the exercise of that benevolence, without which, I know not on what ground we can claim to be his disciples. I will even proceed a step further, and ask, if we have not some advantages for the propagation of our religion, which the apostles had not? With them, christianity was an experiment that was yet to be tried. But we have the evidence of its

truth and excellence, which is derived from the admirable institutions that have grown out of it ; and which as much belong to it, and depend upon it, as the branches of a vine belong to, and depend upon, the stock to which they are attached. We can shew, and prove, that in the degree to which it has been left to itself, unfettered by civil and ecclesiastical restrictions, it has triumphed over the strongest passions, and the most inveterate prejudices and customs ; and has repressed abuses and crimes, which have been established and sanctioned by every other religion. By the knowledge, also, which it has imparted of mutual rights and duties, it has modified, and, we hesitate not to say, has improved civil government, and public morals, to an extent to which no other than christian principles could have advanced them. Who that has thoroughly studied the history of our own country, has a doubt whether we owe our peculiar civil institutions to christianity ?* Nor may we alone defend our religion, and recommend it, by these most obvious and grand results of it. The countless associations which it has originated, for all the conceivable purposes of benevolence ; the systems of education, that are essentially christian, which are forming and advancing throughout Christendom ; the new responsibleness which it devolves upon woman, and the new rank which it has given to her ; the emancipation which it has effected of the poor, from the entailed ignorance, degradation and debasement, in which every other religion finds, and leaves them ; its

* I would refer the reader, who has not much time for inquiry on this subject, to the very able sermon, preached before the Legislature of the Commonwealth, on the 31st of May, by the Rev. Mr Dewey, of New Bedford.

efforts, and its success, in the work of abolishing slavery ; and its influence on the domestic relations, and on domestic happiness ;—these are effects of our religion, which, in proportion as they are comprehended, and are seen in their true character by the intelligent of other religions, will do much, and cannot fail to do much, for its extension*. From what it has done, bad as Christendom is, we can demonstrate its adaptation to the condition, and to the wants of all men, and its tendency to an indefinite improvement of the human mind and character.

* " Before going to war, it is right to count the cost ; and in the conflict which christians have begun to wage for the moral subjugation of the world, it is proper to estimate whether, with their few and scattered numbers, they can cope with the myriads of their opponents. Certainly at no former period had they such means, and such promising success, as we now have. All the ancient 'war weapons' of victory, excepting miracles, are at their disposal ; and new instruments of still greater potency, which the science of the latter days has been accumulating for a universal revolution of the mind, are ready to be brought into action, upon a scale of overpowering magnitude. Even the single resource which is lost, may yet be recompensed by equivalents ; and a substitute, in many respects, may be found for miracles. The first effect of a miracle is, to arouse the attention, and to overawe opposing prejudices. The second, to afford a proof of the truth of the religion, of which it is a sealing accompaniment. The first object may be gained by experimental philosophy. And as to the second, the difference in the proof of our religion, to any to whom it shall now be proposed, from its miracles, lies rather in the fact, that this proof is at the present day more circuitous, than that it is less conclusive, than it was in the days of the apostles. Besides, the turning point of receiving christianity, even in the apostolic age, consisted less in having seen the miracles, than in seeing their own need of a revelation, and its adapta-

The *third*, and last element, or principle, of that spirit, which feels a paramount obligation to do all that it may for the diffusion of our religion, is the feeling, that God, in dispensing signal blessings to men, designs that they whom he so distinguishes, shall be his agents in giving the widest possible extension to these blessings. In other words, *God designs that man shall be his instrument, for imparting the blessings of christianity to man;* and he who has the means, and the opportunities, thus to benefit his fellow creatures, will be held responsible at the bar

tion to the present circumstances of humanity. Moral influence has always prevailed more than supernatural influence. The generation that literally lived on miracles, and had 'angels' food' for their daily bread, perished from unbelief in the desert; whilst their children, brought up in the loneliness of the wilderness, far from the corruptions of the surrounding nations, were even eminent to after times, as an example of 'a right godly nation.'"

Hints on Missions, by James Douglas, Esq. pp. 22—24. This is a sensible little book; and far better worth reading, than have been many books upon the subject of missions, which have been, and are, more popular.

A friend suggests to me the expediency of remarking here, that the effect of miracles, as a means of missionary success, has been overrated; for the apostles seem to have resorted to them only incidentally; and Rammohun Roy says, they are not of the value in the East, which many Christians are accustomed to ascribe to them. It is indeed well known, that the Hindoos boast of far more wonderful miracles, than are related by the Evangelists; and though these reputed miracles are as wonderful absurdities, as were ever imposed upon human credulity, they must, and will dispose unconverted natives of India, to allow but little importance to the miracles of our religion. But converts to christianity, in that country, will obtain new sentiments of the miracles of Hindooism; and then also will they see, in the miracles of the gospel much to confirm their faith, that it is, what it claims to be, a dispensation from God.

of heaven, for the execution of the work which God thus requires of him.

That man should sympathize with man, that he should feel an interest, deep and strong, in the condition of his fellow-men; and, especially, that we should be affected, and strongly affected, by the wants and sufferings, not alone of those around us, but of our whole race, I fear not to say is as much a law of our nature, as it is that we should feel a deep and strong interest in those, who are immediately connected with us, in the nearest relations of life; or, as it is, that we should love ourselves. This feeling may be, and it is, kept down within us, by the ascendant influence, which is obtained in our hearts by narrow, local and selfish interests. It is a feeling, which many of the circumstances in our early education are suited to repress, and to enfeeble in us; and which our daily habits of business and of pleasure, as mere men of the world, may be counteracting, and restraining, and deadening within us. But there are occasions in the life of every one, whose heart has not been shut up by bands of brass, or iron, or adamant, when this feeling, chilled and dead as it may have seemed to be, is warmed into life, and puts forth its strength, and breaks from its enclosures, and speaks in a language not to be misunderstood; at once vindicating our nature from the charge, that,

> "There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart,
> "It does not feel for man;"

and demonstrating that it is the purpose of God, that man shall be his instrument for the communication of all possible blessings to man. I need not refer you to the effects, which are produced within us, while we are read-

ing narratives of real, or of imaginary scenes and circumstances of distress. These effects alone demonstrate, not only that God has made us for one another, but that, in an important sense, he has made each one of us for the whole of our species. Who, I ask, dwells upon the pages of history, merely that he may possess its facts; or simply for the mere personal uses which he may make of them? Or who that knows the blessings of civil rights, and of civil liberty, has not felt all his indignation awakened against the despot, that has trampled upon these rights, even though ages have revolved, since the tyrant and the tyranny have passed away? And who has not felt a joy, an exultation, to be surpassed only by that of an emancipated people, when the tyrant has fallen, and when at least one well directed effort has been made in the cause of human freedom? Who, as he has pondered on the pages of history, has not gone forth with the armies, over whose dust centuries have revolved, and joined the standard of the leader whom he has chosen, and fought for the rights of man; rejoicing, or suffering, as they were obtained, or lost; filled with the interests, the hopes, the fears of the distant age, to which his existence for the hour has been transferred; and prepared for all the efforts and sacrifices of the cause which he has espoused, and which he believes to be the cause of truth, and right, and human happiness? Who has read of the wise, intrepid, persevering, disinterested benefactors of their age,—be that age as distant from us as it may,—and has not felt that they were the glory of our race? Who has not sympathized with them in their purposes, shared their toils, triumphed in their successes,

and lamented their defeats? Who has not felt, when under the influence of their examples, the true greatness and dignity of an heroic, self-denying, upright, and benevolent spirit; struggling against the difficulties that opposed it; sacrificing its ease, its security, its peace, and all its immediate interests, for the advancement of the condition and happiness of others; and who has not felt himself to be raised in the scale of being, by the consciousness that he is united, by the bond of a common nature, with all this virtue, this greatness, this excellence? Yes, it is not less a law of our nature, that we should go out of ourselves, that we should feel a strong interest in others, and not only in the wants and the happiness of our family, our neighborhood, our country and our age, but in those too of men in every country, and in all time, than it is that we should love ourselves. I say not, that one principle is as strong, and steady, and active at all times, or that it is as generally manifested in human conduct, as is the other. It is not. In many it is bound in the chains of a sordid avarice. In many, it is kept in subjection by a miserable ambition, which values nothing, but as it conduces to personal distinction. And in many, it lies buried under heaps of the rubbish of cares and interests, of appetites and propensities, of prejudices and passions, not one of which has an object beyond the individual, to whom they are the chief, and perhaps the only good of life. But the principle of sympathy,—of sympathy, I mean, with the cause of human nature, of human good and happiness,—dead and buried as it sometimes seems to be, does also sometimes rise, and manifest itself; and, with an electric influence, at once ani-

mate, and give new vigor, to thousands, and millions. How has the thril of its power been felt, in the cause of the abolition of the slave trade? How was it felt, when the first struggles of the Greeks for freedom were published throughout christendom? How was it felt, when it was thought that the sun of liberty had broken through the clouds, which, for centuries, had covered Spain; and that a new day was about to open upon that dark spot of the earth? And how was it felt, when we were assured that one and another of the oppressed nations of South America had conquered, had triumphed, had secured a government of its choice, a constitution, equal laws, independence? And who, that has tasted the blessings, and that knows the happiness of civil liberty, does not desire, and will not pray, that it may be universal? Who would not rejoice to hear, that despotism is every where at an end? Who would not contribute what he can, to the cause of the universal emancipation of our race, from the injustice and cruelty, the degradation and misery, of civil tyranny?—And is civil freedom, or are civil rights and privileges, so great a boon, that, merely to name them, is to kindle desire in every heart, that they may be universal? And is the sympathy that is thus excited, one of the provisions of God, for the advancement of the great cause of civil liberty throughout the world? What, then, should be our sympathy in the cause of religion; of religious liberty; of the rescue of man from the slavery of a superstition, a thousand times more debasing than is any civil bondage; in the cause of bringing men to the liberty, the exaltation of condition, and the happiness, of the sons of God?

Christians, let us feel the value of our privileges, and the greatness of our responsibility for them. God has committed them to us for our own improvement, and as means of our own salvation. But is it not also his will, that we should be his instruments for the improvement, and the salvation, of our fellow-men? How, think you, is our religion to be extended through the world, but by the christian earnestness, and the christian benevolence of those, who feel its reality, its worth and its power; and the greatness of the blessings which it will impart to those who receive it? We believe, indeed, that it ever has been, that it is, and that it will be, in the care of him, who sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. But our Lord committed it to the immediate charge of his apostles; and they have left it—to those who shall believe in it. God will honor us as his agents, in the work of imparting to all the greatest of all his blessings. Is proof of the principle demanded? I will ask, why has God, in such diversified measures, allotted to us our talents, and our capacities? Why has he appointed such a diversity in the condition of men? Why has he connected us in bonds of families, of neighborhoods, and of communities? And why has he subjected all to so many weaknesses, and exposures, and wants, and sufferings? No one will doubt, whether one purpose of these ordinations of his providence is, the accomplishment, by the instrumentality of man, of his designs of benevolence towards man. And is it less clearly God's design, that we should extend, as far as we may, the bread of life, and the waters of life, to those who are suffering from the want of them, than it is that we should give of our bread to the hungry, or relieve the distress which we

have the means and opportunity of relieving? Fellow-christians, let us feel that we are to give account to God, for the use which we make of our powers of mind and of body, of our property, of our influence, and of every means which we have of being good, *by doing good.* And if, where much has been given, much will be required, will not much be demanded from us, and may not much be most justly demanded, in return for the most precious of God's gifts to us, the religion of his Son? Admit that the heathens are safe, as far as that idolatry is concerned, the evil of which they know not. The great question to engage our attention is, are *we* safe, while we possess the means of their instruction, their reformation, and their best happiness, and yet fail to employ them to the purposes, for which God has entrusted us with them? Are we safe, if this talent shall be kept by us, laid up in a napkin? Can we render our account with joy at the bar of heaven, if, having freely received this unspeakable gift, we have cared nothing for the condition of those who have it not; and have done nothing, that they may be partakers with us of the salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with everlasting glory?

Suffer me here to say, that I fear we do not think enough of the importance of *prayer* in this, as well as in all our great and important enterprises. God wills that religious truth, like other truth, should be extended by human agency. But not by an independent agency of man. We are, in this great concern, to "be workers together with God;" and while our wills, and affections, and labors, are to be given to the service, we are "in all our ways to acknowledge Him, that he may direct our steps." Before our Lord elected his apostles, he was all

night in prayer to God; and we see his apostles relying not more on their miraculous powers, than on their prayers, for the cooperation of God in their work. Let us not, then, indulge narrow views of our relation to God; of the intimacy of the communion which we may hold with him; and of the influence which may be exerted by God upon us, and by God, in cooperation with us, in perfect consistency with our own moral freedom. Let us, more than we have done, realise what we ask of God, when we pray, "may thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven!"

I address this letter, gentlemen, through you to the Unitarians of our country; and, as a Unitarian, with devout gratitude and joy I hail the beginning of a new era, in the recent, and, I hope, unequivocal demonstration, of a foreign missionary spirit among us. Scarcely less distinct, indeed, is the voice from India to us, than was that to Paul, "come over to Macedonia and help us." A Unitarian society in Calcutta, composed as well of natives as of foreigners, who have themselves contributed largely to the work, solicit our assistance in establishing there a perpetual Unitarian mission. Native gentlemen of India have contributed largely to the cause of establishing christian worship, upon Unitarian principles, in their country; and they, with their English associates, are earnestly requesting the aid of Unitarians in England and America, for the accomplishment of their object. And can there be a question, in this case, concerning our duty? I leave it with every man's conscience, in the sight of God.*

* For information on this subject, see the Christian Examiner for

We live in a time, peculiarly favorable to every attempt that can be made for human improvement and happiness. Nor is it alone in those departments, to which science, with her new and wonderful discoveries, has extended her influence, that we find a new spirit of excitement, and of enterprise. The fact, that the long known mechanic powers are, of late, found to possess capacities, very far beyond all the uses to which they had been applied; and the fact too, not less interesting and important, of the discovery of a new mechanical agent, which may be applied alike to works the most simple, and the most complex; to the greatest and grandest operations, and to those which are most minute; has given an impulse to inquiry, and to the spirit of discovery, and effort, in every department of human knowledge. The idea is awakened, and is abroad, that nothing is to be deemed impracticable, till it has been fairly tried; and that no exertion for an object is to be relaxed, while any means remain, which may be employed for its attainment. It is felt, that there may be new applications of the known capacities of human nature, not yet hinted at in any of our systems of mental philosophy; and even that new moral agents may be discovered, which may be employed to accomplish in the moral world, changes and improvements, as great as have been extended to the various departments of art, by the power of a new physical agent. In Europe, and in our own country, great are the changes that have been accomplished, within the last fifty years, by the systems of education, which have been devised and adopted, and which are widely extending;

March and April, 1826; and Professor Ware's address, delivered before the Berry Street conference, on the 31st May.

by the multiplication of books, which grows with the multiplication of readers; by the new views which have been opened, and are every where obtaining increased and increasing attention; of religious liberty, and of religious rights; and which are awakening new convictions, and new interests, and are giving a new impulse to thought and action. Great are the changes of opinion, which are spreading, and which will continue to spread, through the nations, of the nature and ends of civil government; of the *rights* of the *ruled* and of the duty and accountableness of rulers. And, I am happy to say, that, compared with any former time since the days of the Apostles, great, throughout Christendom, is the revolution that has been produced in opinion and in feeling, concerning the relation of man to man; and concerning our capacity, and obligation, to extend to others the blessings, with which God in his mercy has distinguished us, in the religion which he has given us by his Son. But the principle which, more than any other, has given life, and efficiency, to our systems of education, which has peculiarly multiplied and extended books, and which has spread widely the new sentiments, that have obtained of religious liberty, and of religious rights; the principles, which has given diffusion to the new views which are received of the nature and ends of civil government, and which has attempted, and done, what has never before been done, for the universal extension of our religion, is, *the principle of voluntary association*. And if we may infer what it may do, from what it has done, where shall we fix the limits of its power, and of its consequences? Look alone to the Bible societies, the anti-slavery societies, the peace societies, and the religious

missionary societies of England and of America, and say, what is to arrest their progress, and their effects? Opinion has been called the lever, by which society is now moved, and its vast operations are directed, and controled. But I should rather call it the ground on which the lever is fixed, by which the world is moved. The mighty agent, by which those changes have been accomplished, which are every day exciting new admiration, and new expectations concerning the moral and the political condition of the world, is, the power of voluntary association. It is a power, which, like knowledge, and like wealth, may be made as conducive to evil as to good. But let all the virtuous and the wise feel its importance, and faithfully avail themselves of it, and employ it with the calm, and steady, and persevering zeal which should characterise christians; and, with God's blessing on the work, it will not long be doubtful to any mind, whether indeed the enterprise be feasible, of *the conversion of the world.*

I will only add my hearty good wishes for the prosperity of your association; and my hope that, while we are aiming at the advancement of our religion *at home*, we may all be excited to do what we can, to bring "every knee to bow in the name of Jesus, and every tongue to confess him to be Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

With great respect and affection,

I am, truly yours,

JOSEPH TUCKERMAN.

Chelsea, June 8th, 1826.

ERRATA,—p. 10, line 14th, for *that*, read *than*. Same page, line 25th, after *and*, read *explicit*.

No. 12.

A

DIALOGUE

ON

PROVIDENCE, FAITH, AND PRAYER.

PRINTED FOR THE

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PROVIDENCE, FAITH, AND PRAYER.

Vindicate the ways of God to man.——POPE.

Mr and Mrs Henderson had lately buried their eldest daughter, a lovely girl of eighteen. Their feelings on this occasion were such as affectionate parents usually experience when thus severely afflicted. They were amiable people, and had lived together very happily twenty years. They had brought up a family of four children, and had found as much to love and approve in them as they could reasonably hope. Living in the middle ranks of society, as far removed from degradation on one side, as from reigning in the circles of fashion on the other, they had escaped, perhaps, the severest trials of virtue. They had passed along so far in life, with no other notoriety, than that of being spoken of among the circumscribed number of friends, whom they had attached to themselves, as an inoffensive, kind-hearted, unassuming couple, with a family of orderly and good children, the eldest of whom, now lately deceased, was very lovely in person and mind. Their two sons, one sixteen, and the other fourteen years old, were both apprenticed to substantial good men in the city of Boston, and gave reason to expect that they would

satisfy the affectionate and natural hopes of fond and rational parents. Their youngest child, a daughter of eleven years, was still at school. She had been called home by the sickness of her sister, and with her parents and brothers, had attended and watched the declining young creature, till she sunk under the pressure of her disease, and was relieved by death from all mortal sufferings. Mr and Mrs Henderson at this time experienced feelings, not unusual on such occasions. At first their bodily fatigue, then the excitement of numerous visits of condolence, the sudden relaxation from all personal and mental exertion, and the overpowering sense of their heavy loss, all combined to render their emotions agonizing. For a time they gave themselves up, without restraint, to the full indulgence of their grief. But they were sober, temperate people, and under the habitual restraints of reason and religion. Their minister also was kind and sympathising. He made them frequent visits, and offered them the consolations suggested by his nature, and his office. The hopes of the christian faith, and the support of philosophy, which he said admirably harmonized with the principles of religion, were pointed out; and he endeavored to convince them of the duty and the wisdom of restraining grief, and subduing all spirit of complaint. They had indeed no disposition to murmur at the dispensations of Providence, and assured their friends they would not, if it were in their power, call back their beloved child from the happy state to which they believed her removed, and again involve her in the trials and troubles of life. "And yet," said Mr Henderson, "it is a dark and mysterious dispensation. I cannot see the hand of a merciful God in it, though I will not say I doubt of God's mercy in any thing."

They were alone when Mr Henderson made this ob-

servation to his wife. They had been conversing on the promising qualities of the dear girl they had buried; and the contemplation of the happiness they had hoped to enjoy in her mature years seemed to aggravate their sense of her loss and renew their grief for this heavy bereavement. Mr Henderson, particularly, seemed to find it difficult to reconcile his mind entirely to his trouble. He had often manifested this state of feeling, and his wife this evening ventured to remark upon it.

"Your faith appears to me to be weaker than mine," said she, in reply to her husband's observation. "It seems to me that, respecting those dispensations which are involved in the clouds and darkness that are around the throne of God, you have doubts of his mercy; though you are not willing to acknowledge your doubts."

"Can you always perceive the benevolence of God, in every event of life that takes place?" asked Mr Henderson.

"No my dear," replied his wife, "I do not pretend to be so much clearer sighted than my neighbors; but my not being able to perceive it, does not cause any doubts to arise in my mind respecting the existence of that benevolence."

"Well, I said I did not doubt the mercy of God," interrupted Mr Henderson, "but that I could not see his mercy in all his providences. I wish I could see it, in the case of our dear Elizabeth's death. I must say it would be a great comfort to me."

"But there is certainly a difference in our state of mind," observed Mrs H. and it seems to me that you do feel doubts and painful ones; while, at the same time, your rational convictions forbid you to doubt. I on the

contrary feel no doubts whatever; and therefore my mind is not painfully disturbed, as yours is."

"I do not exactly comprehend what you say," said her husband. "If you do not feel any doubts whatever, and yet you cannot see any plainer than I can the mercy of God, how do you reconcile these two opposing states of mind? There seems some contradiction in this."

"I will endeavor to explain what I mean" replied Mrs Henderson. "I am deeply convinced that, as a finite being, it is quite impossible for me to comprehend and contain within my mind, the views, purposes, and plans of infinite mind. I reason from analogy. I know that any thing which is seen in part, any circumstance which is but partly understood, any action, the motive of which is hidden, must appear not only imperfect, but often distorted and hideous, when the whole, if seen, would display perfect proportion. The secret intention would show goodness and integrity. In the same way, I think it is owing to our seeing only a part of God's design, that we cannot in every event perceive beauty, consistency, and benevolence. Having satisfied myself by the clearest reasoning that God is infinite mind, and that mind infinitely good; whenever any event or course of events appears to speak a different character, instead of doubts arising as to the mercy of God, I immediately advert to my own small and imperfect powers, which are incapable of ever penetrating into the mysterious arrangement of events, and which, seeing only the odds and ends of things, cannot discern the beauty and propriety of the whole design."

"Perhaps it is so," said Mr Henderson, "but I confess there is so much to excite doubt, that it is difficult, at all times, to satisfy the mind that all things are ordered in mercy; and yet, as an abstract truth, I cannot but allow,

that God is a merciful being, infinitely merciful. But when we see a lovely creature, one calculated to be useful, and to diffuse happiness, as well as to enjoy it; one who has lived an innocent life, and who constitutes the chief joy and hope of virtuous parents; when we see such an one snatched away from their arms, and laid in the dismal tomb, cut off from the innocent delights of the world, and its improvements, while the hearts of all around are crushed by the heavy affliction; when we see this, and then turn perhaps to our next door neighbor, and find a beastly, intemperate being, who is a plague to all with whom he lives, and who is incapable of either virtue or happiness himself, or increasing that of others; and this useless, miserable wretch is left, while our lovely child is taken away; who can reconcile these things with that perfect benevolence, that is represented always to will kindness and always to be able to bring to pass what it wills?"

"I am sorry to hear you use these terms, my dear," said Mrs Henderson. "I do not like the expression, 'snatched away;' it seems to imply that anger, and not benevolence, dictated the dispensation. Without proving any thing, such terms operate on the feelings, like argument, and therefore we should avoid them. I do not like 'dismal tomb' for the same reason. The grave is represented as the peaceful asylum of suffering, where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest; and by those who believe it only the receptacle of the once loved, but now resigned body, while the released spirit has risen to happiness and its Maker, it can only be thought of with pensive and holy pleasure. The delights of life you speak of, and its improvements, what are they, compared with those we believe our darling is now enjoying? Our faith

must be aided by reflection, observation, and experience, or we may not be able, in any case, to reconcile the apparent inconsistences, that catch our attention in the course of events; and we cannot, with all our efforts, often be able to perceive and trace the love and mercy, which yet we may believe guides the superintending hand."

"What I can see, I can believe," said Mr Henderson, "but respecting what I cannot see, by any view I can take of a subject, I must still confess, I can never be free from doubts."

"But," said Mrs Henderson, "if those dispensations, which, at the time they occurred, appeared altogether opposed to divine benevolence, have, by the course of subsequent events, evidently displayed that principle, would not such dispensations serve greatly to establish a reliance on God, and faith in his goodness, and prevent the same state of doubt from occurring to you again, when suffering under a painful affliction of the kind you have described?"

"I do not know that it would," replied Mr Henderson. "I have in the course of my life, several times, been thus situated, and have clearly perceived that a circumstance, which I deprecated as a great misfortune, at the time it occurred, has proved in the end a blessing, and that which I hailed as auspicious, has turned out a bad business; and yet I have not been so established in the faith you speak of, as always to be able to rely upon it."

"But that is because your early impressions were not in favor of an overruling Providence," said his wife. I think it of very great importance that children's minds should be early and deeply impressed with the great and fundamental truths of religion; for I have constantly observed, that the fullest convictions of the understanding

in mature life, are feeble instruments in removing strong early impressions. If our infant notions are correct, our rational convictions in mature life will confirm them, and our faith will be solid and satisfactory. If, on the contrary, our first ideas are false, and deeply impressed, it is next to impossible that the understanding, however clear in its deductions, and sincere in its purpose, should remove the feeling it opposes, so that it will not recur again and again. You were brought up with the notion that chance or destiny ordered all events; and though you have long been convinced that when you reason on the subject, there is no sound argument to be urged in favor of this opinion, but every thing to confirm that of a particular Providence, yet your early impressions remain for your discomfort, whenever any circumstances of a distressing nature occur."

"I wish it were possible," she added in an affectionate tone, "to transfer to you the repose and resignation which I enjoy, from having been early impressed with a belief that God is a kind and watchful guardian, who orders all our affairs from benevolent motives."

"I do not see that I can help it," replied Mr Henderson. I read the books adapted to convince my mind, and then I feel assured I have studied the New Testament, and am satisfied of its truth. I have made a profession of religion, and wish to be a christian. What more can I do?"

"My dear husband," said Mrs Henderson, "I will say more of you than you say for yourself. You not only wish to be a christian, but you manifest by a life of strict conformity to the precepts of Jesus Christ, that you really are a christian, in spirit, and life. But you fail of reap-

ing the joys of a christian, from a want of those feelings of faith, which I enjoy by the blessings of early instructions."

Mr Henderson was affected by this proof of the tender love and approbation of his wife; and moved by that internal feeling of humility, which every real christian must understand, he said, "do not, my dear, bestow praise like this on a being so utterly useless and worthless as I feel myself to be."

"When we think of ourselves in relation to God and to the character exhibited by our Saviour," replied Mrs Henderson, "it is altogether proper, as it is entirely true, that we should esteem ourselves unworthy, and feel self-abased before our Maker and our Master. But we are taught by that master to judge ourselves and to judge others by the actions of our lives, as we judge of trees by their fruit; and in doing this, we must discriminate between our good and bad actions. We must compare ourselves with others, and when thus comparing actions, we must perceive, and it is proper to express candidly, in what we rise above, and in what we sink below others. In this view of ourselves, we may with gratitude to God rejoice that, in some instances, we have been enabled to follow the example of Jesus Christ, and trust, that our endeavors to do so, may be accepted in all cases. At the same time, we ought to search our heart, and if in any thing it is not right before God, preferring its own will to his, we should acknowledge it, and humble ourselves accordingly. But even in the deepest devotion, we should be under the guidance of reason, and not abandon ourselves to emotions, however pious they may be."

"I do not think it right to abandon ourselves to feeling," said Mr Henderson, "nor do I ever allow myself to do it. Emotions will come; doubts will present themselves. I can command my feelings as well, I believe, as most people; but I can do it only by turning my mind forcibly from what affects me, and engaging it in a different train of thought. I can restore peace in no other way."

"I never found that method effectual with my feelings," said Mrs Henderson; "it only shuts out the tide, till accident breaks down the barrier, and then the torrent is overpowering."

Mr Henderson answered, "If I attempt to reconcile my feelings to painful events, instead of banishing those feelings, I am immediately overpowered by the multitude of distressing doubts which present themselves, and which I can neither quiet nor remove."

"There is only one resource in all such difficulties," said Mrs Henderson, "and that appears to me always effectual whether the faith is weak or powerful. At least I have found it so, in every period of my life and under all circumstances."

"You mean the power of religion, I suppose," said her husband; "but, as I told you before, with me it is not sufficient; my faith is not strong enough, it is not implicit enough to answer the purpose."

"No," interrupted Mrs Henderson, "I did not intend to advert to the general influence of religion; but to the power of one act of christian faith. It is prayer only, that I should think effectual in relieving our minds of such thoughts as afflict you. Prayer is the greatest privilege of a christian. The highest, the holiest, the noblest

employment of men. It is also the most natural of all acts. When the mind is deeply wounded and perplexed, when we are pressed on every side, and can find no hope of relief from any quarter where human reason directs us, the very despair we feel prompts us to direct our thoughts to some power above ourselves, and to implore relief. In perfect conformity to this opinion is the anecdote of the Indian woman, who, seeing her child sinking in the wave where no human power could reach him, extended her arms in an agony of despair, and falling on her knees, exclaimed, "O, THOU EVERY WHERE, save my child." This was instinct, and in perfect unison with this instinct, are the precepts of our Saviour. Nature and faith direct the uncorrupted mind, in every extremity, to ask of God that help, which no other power can afford."

"All that would be very well," replied Mr Henderson, "if, when we ask for relief, we could be always sure of receiving it. We should then be so much encouraged as to resort to this remedy in every evil. But the truth is, that however earnestly we implore, relief is often denied us, and therefore we naturally doubt its efficacy."

"Oh no, my dear," exclaimed Mrs Henderson, "it is not so. I am sure you cannot believe that a sincere and ardent prayer was ever offered in vain."

"I do not know what you mean," replied Mr Henderson, surprised in his turn. "Did we not daily pray that the life of our dear child might be spared? did we not have our minister to pray for us? did we not seek this blessing with many tears, and with the most pious and humble state of mind? and were not our prayers disregarded, and our precious child taken from us?"

"Will you let me express in my own language the state

of our minds, and the object of our prayers, and the dealings of God with us, in this case?" asked Mrs Henderson.

"Do so, my love;" replied her husband; "I should be glad to receive light from your way of viewing it."

"You say," observed Mrs Henderson, "that we offered our prayers in the most pious and humble state of mind. If so, we certainly believed that God, who knows all things, could see better than we could, what events would really prove a blessing to us, and what would not; and we should pray conditionally, that he would grant what we asked, if he could see it would prove for our happiness. And, as he has ordered things otherwise, our piety and humility require us to submit with resignation to the refusal of our petitions."

"Very well," interrupted Mr Henderson, "allow it to be as you say. Still my assertion remains uncontroverted, that we ask, and are denied. If we prayed not at all, in what should we be losers?"

"I do not view the subject in the same light," replied Mrs Henderson. "I still believe that our prayers are accepted, and answered, if we really pray with sincere and humble minds."

"I do not see how you make it out," said Mr Henderson.

"I can only speak for myself," Mrs Henderson said. "I feel convinced that my petitions are heard, and are accepted, and my prayer granted, if not exactly in the way my own imperfect views would have induced me to dictate, had a choice been allowed me, yet so as to fill my heart with gratitude and resignation."

"How is it, then, we differ so essentially," inquired Mr Henderson, "seeing we are both professors of the religion of Jesus Christ? Both were piously offering prayers for the life of our child, both equally distressed by the fear of losing her; how is it we feel so differently? Tell me the whole process in yourself; and let us compare the state of our feelings and our conduct, step by step, and see, if we can, where the difference lies."

"For my own part," replied his wife, "I never feel disposed to pray, unconditionally, for any outward circumstance. I pray unconditionally, I plead urgently, that I may be blessed with that spirit which will unite me to my Maker, that I may have the spirit of Christ, and be enabled to view all my temporal circumstances as ordered in infinite mercy. In short, I pray not for external, but internal changes; that my mind may be conformed altogether to the will of God. I pray also, for all those that are dear to me, that each one may be transformed into the spirit of meekness, of wisdom, of love, of goodness, so that we may all go on our way rejoicing, let that way be checkered as it will. For every thing else, my dear husband, I pray only in humble submission to the wisdom and goodness of God, not daring to wish that my imperfect mind shall in any thing dictate what events shall happen to me."

"What then," exclaimed Mr Henderson, "did you not pray earnestly and devoutly for the life of our dear Elizabeth?"

"I did not pray for it, unconditionally," replied Mrs Henderson. "I dare not manifest so much presumption. I did pray, if God could see it for the best good of all concerned, that he would grant her to our prayers; but I

was afraid to ask more. Even Jesus Christ did not, in the greatest extremity, offer a prayer for deliverance on any other ground. 'Not my will,' said he, 'but thine be done.' I prayed also, and with deep earnestness, that our minds might be prepared for whatever events should be ordered by his goodness; and that, under any circumstances, we might each of us be supported by his spirit, and receive his healing mercy.

"My prayers, I am sure, were heard and granted; and though God has called us to mourn, we ought also to acknowledge and be grateful for the grace he has given us."

"What do you mean by the grace of God?" asked Mr Henderson; "This is a phrase very commonly used, but I never could exactly comprehend its meaning."

"Grace, my dear husband, does it not mean favor?" asked Mrs Henderson, a little embarrassed.

"I do not know," replied her husband, "I am no scholar; nor am I learned in theology."

"Nor do I pretend to be learned in any thing," said Mrs Henderson; "but I think grace means any of God's blessings. It is by God's grace we live, and are provided with the comforts and conveniences of life; it is by his grace we have the enjoyment of rational faculties and bodily powers. But generally, when God's grace is spoken of, I suppose his spiritual favors are intended to be expressed."

"Well, and what do you call the spiritual favors of God," asked Mr Henderson. After a moment's pause, during which Mrs Henderson seemed deep in thought, she replied. "If I find my mind, on any occurrence, greatly disturbed, my spirits depressed, my feelings excited, and some deeply painful impressions made upon it by par-

ticular circumstances, and if, in this state, my religious principles and reflections are unequal to restoring my quiet and tranquillity; if my philosophy is insufficient, and all common aid fails me, I have then two methods left, which may bring back my peace. On the ground of philosophy, I may presume, as it is one of its principles, that nothing violent can last long, that when time has been allowed its influence, I shall recover the cheerful tone of my feelings. Or on the ground of religion, I may hope, that God will do for me what I cannot do for myself, if I earnestly implore his mercy to calm the tumults of my feelings. The assistance I receive, the serenity and peace which are restored, is the answer to my prayer. This is the grace of God, his spiritual favor; it is that unseen, and often unknown operation of his power, that preserves the human mind, through all the vicissitudes of life, so capable of happiness; and when it is under the habitual influence of religion, renders it so uniformly peaceful and contented."

"Will you pretend to say," asked Mr Henderson, "that a miracle is performed, in favor of those who pray in the manner and circumstances you describe? and that peace and happiness are restored to their minds by the immediate operation of God's spirit, and not by strictly natural means? That is a fallacy to which I can never yield my mind. I am not enthusiast enough to believe that."

"My dear husband," replied his wife, "it is not my mind, but yours, which is imposed upon by fallacy. The terms, natural means, and miracle, are both used so indefinitely, they are so obscure and vague, that they are altogether fallacious in their common application. If, in the case we are speaking of, you intend to express by the term, strictly natural means, the mode in which

the human mind is always affected in similar circumstances, I will assert that the operation of divine grace in thus producing a desirable state of feeling, when thus earnestly prayed for, is nothing more nor less than strictly natural means. For I fully believe that every sincere prayer offered to God for a proper temper of mind, is followed by the temper of mind desired; and yet I do as fully believe the state of feeling would not have been produced, without the ardent desire and humble petition. Prayer is the appointed means of obtaining the blessing, the condition on which it is promised; and when all these circumstances occur, the effect always follows. Thus it may be called strictly natural means. I do not know any means that separates the mind from the influence of Deity. Nature is only another name to express the common providence of God; and this effect on the mind through the means of prayer I consider of that kind."

Mr Henderson then said, "if you call such an effect of prayer, the operation of natural causes, what do you think produces the effect you call philosophical. Is not that also the operation of natural causes? and if so, what is the difference between them?"

"My dear husband," said Mrs Henderson, "does not God preserve and bless us, when we do not ask him? when we even forget him, and disobey him? He invites us to turn to him and find happiness, by all the variety of events in which his Providence places us. If a painful event induces us to seek him, and ask his gracious influence, we receive it, and our peace is restored. If we do not seek him, he gradually restores our peaceful state of mind, but not such peace as prayer brings; and thus prepares us for new incitements. All the train of human

events, and all the states of mind resulting from them, are only the varied means used by our Heavenly Father to draw our hearts to him, and conform our spirits entirely to him ; by which eternal happiness will be secured to us."

"Then," interrupted Mr Henderson, "you mean to say that what is called the philosophical cause, is, in your opinion, only the operation of God on the mind, without any voluntary co-operation of that mind ; and what is called spiritual influences, is God's operation on the mind, in co-operation with the earnest and expressed desires of the heart ? "

"Yes, that is what I think, my dear," replied his wife ; "and I should like to explain my ideas more at large, if you think them worth attending to."

Mr Henderson made no reply, but appearing to listen, Mrs Henderson continued. "With those persons who never seek the aid of God's grace, who know nothing of religious intercourse with their Maker, God deals in a certain manner, and such as he perceives to be the most effectual in bringing them to the state of mind most conformed to his own, and therefore most capable of rendering them happy. This being the case with the greatest number of human beings, embracing barbarians, semicivilized people, heathens, infidels, idiots, insane persons, and little children, the methods pursued respecting them are the most frequently observable ; so that they who take notice and reason on the circumstances of human life, come at length to the conclusion that God has established certain general laws by which he chooses to govern the world, which they call laws of nature, or philosoph-

ical causes ; as if God had delegated to other powers, the conduct of those circumstances, which require constant attention and superintendency, while he reserves for himself only the management of those few and extraordinary events, which he deems more important, and requiring greater exertion of divine power. But it is easy to perceive that this mode of reasoning is the effect of man's imperfect faculties, which, not comprehending an idea of Deity, are disposed to circumscribe the attributes of God by their own narrow views."

"This view of the subject seems rational," observed Mr Henderson.

Mrs Henderson continued. "God deals differently with the class of persons, who come into nearer communication with him by means of religion. They are drawn, by their lively faith in divine revelation, to seek the favor of their Heavenly Father directly. They know, they feel that they are led by his spirit, whenever they do not resist it; and they desire to become more and more conformed to it, and to live by it. They know they shall be heard by their Maker, whenever they sincerely ask for his assistance and influence. They are convinced they shall be permanently united to God, if they strive to subdue the evil passions and abandon the conduct, which separate them from him, and are truly and earnestly desirous that he should reign in their hearts. To all such persons, and in all their circumstances, God uniformly grants his grace, according to his own divine measure and wisdom ; and still, as with mankind at large, effects follow causes, uniformly and constantly ; and the reward of spiritual favor, on the urgent request for it, is as much a general mode of operation, as that adopted for the greater num-

bers. It is less frequent only because fewer minds are in the state to ask and receive. It is therefore, strictly speaking, as much a natural law as the other."

"I like that explanation," said Mr Henderson.

Mrs Henderson's countenance became irradiated, as her husband's mind appeared impressed. She continued. "There are other situations and circumstances of the mind in which a different mode of operation is adopted by God. In this method, God sees fit to manifest himself sensibly to his creatures, either on their minds immediately, or by interrupting his general course. These circumstances, occurring much less frequently than either of the others I have noticed, and indeed, since the Christian era, having apparently not occurred at all, are considered by mankind as the only instances of God's directly operating on worldly affairs; and accordingly they are distinctly called miraculous. But as such phenomena always occur in the same given situation of men, they ought to be considered as means, as strictly natural as any other mode that God uses to effect his purposes."

"If what is called natural means, and what are called divine interpositions, and what is called miracle, are all equally the methods uniformly pursued by God to reform and elevate the human character, and unite the spirit of man with his Maker, why is it that such different terms have obtained such general use? I wish you to recapitulate a little on this subject," said Mr Henderson.

Mrs Henderson replied. "The different states of the human mind, which God always regards in his dealings with us, require these different methods, to produce the same result, which is, union with him, and consequent

happiness. These different methods are noticed by us while the causes for them are disregarded. Mankind are prone to look out of themselves for a cause, and are too inattentive to the similar states of mind, which are followed by similar providences; and hence the erroneous ideas of the different modes of operation, which are considered arbitrary in cases of providential interference and miracles, while his ordinary dealings are supposed to be by established laws, which, when once arranged, are afterwards abandoned by him to their own consequences. The different phraseology is necessary to distinguish the different methods; and if the terms were used only to designate the different states of mind and circumstances of mankind, there would be no false notions imbibed."

"This is a different view of the subject from any I have ever before taken," said Mr Henderson; "and certainly it is more consistent with the character of God, than to suppose, as I have hitherto done, that in all the common concerns of life he holds himself at a distance, and is unconcerned how the world is going on; and that it is only on great occasions, and in uncommon circumstances, he condescends to interfere with the established order of things. In the view you have given, God is intimately acquainted with every event of every individual, even to his smallest emotion, as well as his general state of feeling; and he adapts every circumstance to the exact state of mind of each individual, at all times, and in such a manner, as on the whole to be productive of the greatest benefit to each one of his creatures. I have never before taken such a view of our relation to God."

After a short pause, he added in a pensive tone, "I am afraid I have never prayed as I ought."

"How have you prayed, my dear husband?" asked his wife. "You have always been sincere in your prayers, have you not?"

"Yes," replied Mr Henderson, "I have not been hypocritical certainly. I have prayed sincerely as an act of devotion to God; believing it a duty to acknowledge mercies received, to praise my Maker, to confess my sins and ask forgiveness. But I have never felt it a privilege, a delight, the highest honor, to be allowed to disclose my feelings to my God, as really and truly my best friend. I have never asked divine aid and direction, with a full and entire conviction, that I was addressing a Being present with me, and able and willing to grant me every blessing proper for me; and, especially, I have never for a moment imagined I must ask him to influence my feelings and my mind, so as to produce the state which will be most agreeable to him, and most happy for myself. I never before conceived this to be the object of prayer. I have never felt it as I ought. But, I confess, my views are changed. The ways of Providence seem lighted up anew. I perceive grounds of resignation in view of our dear Elizabeth's death, which were concealed from me. My faith in God, as the infinitely kind Father of his children, has gained new strength. Never did my relation to this gracious Being seem so near and intimate as it does at this moment. Devotion will henceforward have delight for me that I have not before been able to derive from it. You remember the beautiful hymn on the SEASONS OF PRAYER which you have so often repeated to me? It breathes a spirit in perfect unison with my present feelings."

SEASONS OF PRAYER.

To prayer, to prayer;—for the morning breaks,
And earth in her Maker's smile awakes.
His light is on all below and above,
The light of gladness and life and love.
Oh, then, on the breath of this early air,
Send upward the incense of grateful prayer.

To prayer;—for the glorious sun is gone,
And the gathering darkness of night comes on.
Like a curtain from God's kind hand it flows
To shade the couch where his children repose.
Then kneel, while the watching stars are bright,
And give your last thoughts to the Guardian of night.

To prayer;—for the day that God has blest
Comes tranquilly on with its welcome rest.
It speaks of creation's early bloom;
It speaks of the Prince who burst the tomb.
Then summon the spirit's exalted powers,
And devote to Heaven the hallowed hours.

There are smiles and tears in the mother's eyes,
For her new born infant beside her lies.
Oh hour of bliss! when the heart o'erflows
With rapture a mother only knows.
Let it gush forth in words of fervent prayer;
Let it swell up to Heaven for her precious care.

There are smiles and tears in that gathering band,
Where the heart is pledged with the trembling hand.
What trying thoughts in her bosom swell,
As the bride bids parent and home farewell!
Kneel down by the side of the tearful fair,
And strengthen the perilous hour with prayer.

Kneel down by the sinner's dying side,
And pray for his soul through him who died.
Large drops of anguish are thick on his brow;
Oh what is earth and its pleasures now?
And what shall assuage his dark despair,
But the penitent cry of humble prayer?

Kneel down at the couch of departing faith,
And hear the last words the believer saith.
He has bidden adieu to his earthly friends;
There is peace in his eye that upward bends;
There is peace in his calm confiding air;
For his last thoughts are God's, his last words prayer.

The voice of prayer at the sable bier!
A voice to sustain, to sooth, and to cheer.
It commends the spirit to God who gave;
It lifts the thoughts from the cold dark grave;
It points to the glory where he shall reign,
Who whispered, 'Thy brother shall rise again.'

The voice of prayer in the world of bliss!
But gladder, purer, than rose from this.
The ransomed shout to their glorious King,
Where no sorrow shades the soul as they sing;
But a sinless and joyous song they raise,
And their voice of prayer is eternal praise.

Awake, awake, and gird up thy strength
To join that holy band at length.
To Him, who unceasing love displays,
Whom the powers of nature unceasingly praise,
To Him thy heart and thy hours be given;
For a life of prayer is the life of heaven.

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ON

EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION.

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ON

EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION.

One of the many random charges brought against Unitarians at the present day is, that they are no friends to *Experimental Religion;* that they know nothing about it, and being strangers to it themselves, do not seek to promote it in others. It is true, they are not friends to what has sometimes been called experimental religion; for we think this is an expression, which has had the fate to be strangely abused and perverted. Many talk and write about experimental religion, as if it were a mysterious, unintelligible process or possession, the badge to be worn by those few only, who are the special favorites of heaven. They divide the whole world into but two classes, between whom there is a deep and wide gulf of separation, and take no note of the various degrees, more or less imperfect, in which the true spirit of religion may be cherished, and which constitute a very great diversity in the religious characters of men. What they understand by experimental religion seems to be a certain tangible object, which is to be seized or acquired altogether, or else nothing is gained; it is the result of a peculiar call of God, comes from influences entirely

supernatural, and is in fact a sort of miraculous power, which enables them, and them only, to step at once out of darkness into light, to leave what is termed the world, and join what is termed the company of the saints. Hence they sometimes speak of *getting* religion and *losing* religion, as they would speak of getting or losing property, as if it were an outward possession, and not a temper of mind and heart; as if it were a certain point, at which, when they arrive, they are to stop and congratulate themselves on the possession, and not a principle of increase and improvement in piety and holiness; as if it were a kind of charter for heaven, put into their hands they know not how nor whence, and insuring to them by one stirring process the benefits of salvation.

Now these and kindred views, we believe to be as contradictory to every correct interpretation of scripture, as they are to the suggestions of the understanding and of reason. But no one, who is acquainted with the subject, will say that, therefore, we believe that there is in reality no such thing as experimental religion. Very far from it. We do believe most firmly in its reality and power. It is an old complaint, that men are governed by words more than by things. Opinions and feelings are so much modified by associated ideas, that people are very apt to look with contempt on what have become favorite expressions with those, whose opinions they deem irrational and unscriptural, even when the expressions themselves may have a true and good meaning. That this incautious association of ideas has led some minds to an indiscriminate and unjustifiable dislike of the phrase *experimental religion*, we do not deny. But it is in itself a very significant and appropriate phrase, and

may be so used as to express none but good and just ideas; nor would we by any means reject it, because it has sometimes been abused by the unskilful or the fanatical.

Experimental religion, of course, signifies religion, the influence of which is and has been experienced; and when we speak of experiencing religion, we use the same language, and in the same sense, as when we speak of experiencing the influence of any principle or emotion, as of love, joy, sorrow, &c. The language is perfectly plain and intelligible in the one case, and there is no reason why it should not be equally plain and intelligible in the other. The word *experimental* is sometimes opposed to *theoretical;* thus we speak of an experimental farmer, meaning thereby one who carries into practice all those rules of good husbandry which he has learned from experience. It is sometimes opposed to a mere *display of words;* as when we say such a man may talk about trouble but another knows it by experience. And in general, in connexion with whatever subject it may be used, it denotes *personal, practical acquaintance* with the subject. Just so it is in religion. When we speak of it as experimental, we understand by it that thorough vital religion, which is planted in the heart, and sanctifies the thoughts, the purposes and the life, and which stands opposed to mere speculation, or mere profession, to idle clamors or boastful words.

I will endeavor to point out what I conceive to be the elements, which enter into the composition of experimental religion, when it is rightly understood, and exhibited in a scriptural, just and solemn form.

1. One requisite to experimental religion is, that we should receive the truths of religion *as realities;* I mean

that they should stand forth to the mind, as having a distinct existence, in bright colors, with as much definite certainty, as if they lived and breathed before us. And this is not so common nor so easy as we may suppose it to be. It is without doubt common and easy to give our *assent* to religious truths; but this we may do, and yet those truths may be no *realities* to us. We may assent to them, because the evidence which accompanies them, is too strong to be resisted or refuted; but to have them actually present to the mind in the freshness of vivid existence, is quite a different thing. There are certainly many truths which we do not and cannot deny, but which we never realize,—many to which the understanding consents, but which pass across the mental vision like fleeting clouds, whose changing tints die away upon the eye, or like those mists which roll off in dim and shadowy succession, and are forgotten. The arm that is palsied may be as useless as if it were severed from the body; so that belief in religion, which is weakened and neutralized by the want of a distinct and powerful feeling of reality, may be as inefficacious as if it did not exist at all.

Take a few instances, in which each one may appeal to his own consciousness.

We say and we believe, that there is a God, a living Spirit, who formed and who sustains the universe, and who is present in every part of it by his knowledge and agency. But do we realize this great truth? Is it as much an object of constant and unfailing certainty to our minds as the existence of our friends and associates here on earth? Does it attend us in our meditations and our pursuits, as a truth upon which we act, and which gives a cast and color to our views and purposes? Is it not to be

feared, that after all, it is frequently only a formal consent of a mind which sees God in nothing, and nothing in God? Thus likewise it is an object of rational belief with us, that God exercises over us a natural and moral government, designed to train us up to holiness and happiness. But let conscience say whether this truth is as much a reality to us as the civil government of our country under which we live. Are we as habitually and firmly persuaded of the one as of the other? Do the laws of the divine administration present themselves as actually and definitely to our minds, as the laws of the land, by which we are bound to regulate our conduct? Must we not confess, that these truths are something less real to our feelings and conceptions in the one case, than in the other?—Again: it is a point of belief with us, that we are accountable beings, that we are responsible to a high and awful tribunal for our time and our talents, our privileges and means,—that "we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ,"—and that "every one of us must give account of himself to God."—Now are we prepared to say that this truth is a solemn reality with us? Do we actually feel it to be as much so as our legal and pecuniary obligations to our fellow men? Examine it by this test, and see if the hold which we have on this most momentous truth be not quite too feeble and nominal,—if there be not that chilling want of reality, which cripples our faith and robs it of its power.—Once more; we believe in the history of Jesus Christ, of all that he did, and taught and suffered for the salvation of man. But let us put the question to our hearts,—have we a realizing sense of what we owe to this Heavenly Benefactor? Have we as keen and vivid a feeling of the services and love of the

blessed Saviour, as we have of the poor, short-lived kindness of our earthly friends? Alas! for us, that God should in the Gospel reach forth the arm of his mercy to lift us up and bless us, and yet that we should look upon it with cold indifference.

I have mentioned these merely as instances of the state of mind, to which I have alluded,—a state of lethargy and deadness with regard to the *reality* of religion. Men believe or profess to believe what you teach them of the great truths, which relate to eternity; but they do not realize them,—they do not suffer them to be wrought into the whole texture of their thoughts and feelings, as they do with respect to those truths which prompt and regulate their mechanical, agricultural or mercantile pursuits.—Now it is manifest, that while they remain in such a state, they can have nothing which deserves the name of experimental religion. On such a soil, at the best, nothing but stinted shrubbery and half-formed fruits can ever grow. If we would experience the power of Christianity, we must love it; and how can we love it, if we do not realize it? There must be a strong, vital feeling, that the great and essential principles of religion are as true as that the sun shines upon us, or else "the kingdom of God" will be to us not "in power," but "in word" only. This persuasion must lie at the foundation of all experimental holiness of heart.

I know that the sense of the reality of the great truths relating to God, to his moral government, to our accountableness, and to the solemnities of a future state, may, in a peculiar state of mental weakness or in the excitement of passion, operate so blindly, and with such painful intenseness, as to produce nothing but anguish or dismay of

spirit; and this distressing perversion of a good thing may induce us to dread being in earnest about religion. But, we should remember there is as much difference between a solemn and affecting sense of the actual truth of religion, and that agonizing feeling which crushes the heart, as there is between health and sickness, between a pure atmosphere and pestilent vapors. Lay it down for a first principle, that there must be something more than a faint, nominal, misty and loose belief in the great doctrines of Christianity, if we would have them come upon our souls in their power and purity,—that, in short, there can be no such thing as experimental religion, without a deep and earnest feeling of the *reality* of its truths and principles.

2. Another essential requisite to experimental religion, is a sense of *personal interest* in the subject. It is not enough to believe in the truths of the Gospel; it is not enough even to have a deep feeling of their reality. We must go further; we must appropriate them personally to ourselves, to our own warning, our own improvement, and our own encouragement. This is an indispensable step in the process by which the power of Christianity is brought into the heart and enthroned there. No man ever experienced religion, in any rational sense, who did not consider its great and solemn truths as applicable to himself, to his own peculiar moral condition, his own spiritual wants, his sorrows, his temptations, and his sins. It is very easy to be loud in the praises of Christianity, to bestow upon it splendid and eloquent applause, to think and speak of it as a glorious and beautiful dispensation, to tell how it stimulates and fills the vast spiritual desires of the human breast, how it relieves every want, and

brightens all despondency; to be wrapt into admiration at the light which it sheds on eternity, at the everlasting hopes which it holds out to the aspirations of man, at the dignity and elevation which it imparts to the affections of our nature that cleave to immortality; it is, I say, very easy to think and talk in this glowing strain, and yet have no feeling of a personal interest in this most blessed gift of God to man. We may consider it in every point of view, except that in which it touches *our* hearts, and addresses itself to *our* souls. We may regard it as that, in which mankind in general have an interest, but in which *we* have no peculiar interest. Thus we may please ourselves with a sort of romantic warmth about it, and forget meanwhile that its vital power has never gone down into our hearts.

Now this general, vague, superficial way of thinking and feeling will never be sufficient to make religion a matter of experimental acquaintance to the heart of the individual. It is certainly important to have and to cherish these large and noble views of religion, and of the benefits it has conferred on the human race. But we must penetrate more deeply into its spirit, if we would personally know its power. We must go with it into our closets, and commune with it alone, and submit our motives, desires, and purposes to its strict and unsparing scrutiny, however painful it may be. We must retire from those wide considerations, which connect it with the world around us, and view ourselves as the *peculiar* objects of its counsels, its precepts, its warnings, its hopes, and its fears. Religion must be permitted to address us, as Nathan addressed David; it must say, "*thou* art the man." It must not stand before us in the dis-

tance, merely as a bright vision to gratify our sense of the moral sublime; it must be felt in its presence and nearness, as a subject of personal concern, and as bringing an errand from God to *our* hearts and souls. All this it must certainly do, or it cannot be *experimental* religion.

Does the voice of nature and of revelation teach us that there is a God, an Infinite Spirit, who rules all worlds? Then let each one say—this God is *my* Father, *my* Creator, *my* Governor, and will be *my* Judge.—Are we taught that we stand responsible to the bar of heaven for the use of all our gifts and privileges? Let every individual, then, consider how this awful truth bears upon him personally, and what answer *he* could give, were he now summoned to his final account.—Does Christianity present to us that Saviour, who came to bring light and pardon to a world lying in darkness and sin, and "to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works?" Then let every one solemnly ask himself—has Christianity been to me *personally* "the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation?" Have I imbibed the spirit and imitated the example of him, who lived and died for me?—And does the Gospel teach us, that our spirits go not down to the dust with our bodies, but are made for immortality and retribution? Does it disclose to our view the world beyond the grave, in which "tribulation and anguish shall be upon every soul of man that doeth evil, bat glory, honor, and peace to every man that worketh good?" Let this solemn thought, then, personally affect each one of us; and let every heart seek earnestly for itself, that "an entrance may be ministered into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and

Saviour, Jesus Christ."—By such applications as these, of the searching truths of Christianity, our religion may become a *personal* concern; and this will be one of the effectual means of making it *experimental.* When, therefore, the instructions and exhortations of divine truth occur to thy mind, do not meet them with the cold reflection that they belong to others; be assured, that they belong to thee, that thou hast a personal concern in them of imperishable and everlasting value. Then shalt thou know by thine own experience the strengthening and refreshing influence of heavenly truth; then shalt thou have "rejoicing in thyself, and not in another."

3. The last step, which I shall mention, in the acquisition of experimental religion is, that it must be within us a governing *principle of life and conduct.* Without this, all the rest is useless.—It is in vain that we realize the truths of Christianity as having an actual and distinct existence; it is in vain that we view them as applicable in a personal manner to ourselves, unless they become habitual principles of action, and manifest themselves in all the ways of good living. Till they have become so, though they may, like barren trees, stand forth in form and comeliness, yet they have no deep, vigorous roots, and are laden with no precious fruits. Let it appear that religion pervades the life, that its spirit is infused into our temper and conduct, that our daily thoughts, motives, and purposes are purified and consecrated by its influences,—then, and then only, will it be *experimental* religion.

This is the ultimate test, by which the profession of a personal acquaintance with the spirit of Christianity is to be tried and proved. It is easy and common enough

to talk in vague and high-wrought strains about conversion and about experimental religion; but to manifest, in our daily conduct and dispositions, the experience of real religion in our hearts is much more difficult, and at the same time incomparably better and more satisfactory. There is something very deceptive to many minds in the practice, which is so common, of pointing out a specific time, when a certain swell of feeling—they scarcely know what or whence—passed over their minds; in supposing themselves to have been brought out of darkness into marvellous light by one process, if not instantly; and in loving the mere means and observances of Christianity. While they become deeply engaged in these things, they are apt to mistake the warmth and eagerness, which they excite, for a real, personal interest in religion itself.

The object at which all the means and institutions of the Gospel aim, is purity of heart and life; without this, its purpose is not answered. Men may say what they will; but Christ and his Apostles teach us, that we have no more religion than we have moral goodness, no more piety than we have virtue. All the professions, all the fervor, all the excitement in the world are as empty and unmeaning, as the babbling of a noisy brook, if they do not make us better. And by this, I mean really and practically better, as Christians and as members of society. I do not mean making us think ourselves a great deal better than all the rest of the world, and say in the spirit of the Pharisee of old—"God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are," and deny the name and character of Christians to those around us, whose lives and conduct are at least as near the Christian standard, as our own.

We are free to confess, that the only experimental religion, which we deem valuable, is that which consists in being good and doing good on Christian principles and with Christian motives,—and not that, which consists only or mainly in certain floating feelings and mysterious transactions between God and the soul. The man, whose life manifests that the flame of piety is burning, like a holy fire, upon the altar of the heart within, who, like his Saviour, "goes about doing good," who lives under a solemn sense of his accountableness in the sight of God, who receives the blessings, that fall to his lot, with a devout remembrance of the great source from which they come, and bows himself to affliction with a full persuasion that it is administered by the hand of paternal mercy, and with the spirit of submission that says, "Father, not my will, but thine be done," who habitually connects in his thoughts earth with heaven, and time with eternity, who "uses this world, as not abusing it, remembering that the fashion thereof passeth away," who daily lives "as seeing God who is invisible," never forgetting that "the things which are seen are temporal, while the things that are unseen are eternal,"—this is he, who has, in the only proper and Gospel sense, *experimental religion*, for he only it is, who gives an undeniable and standing proof, that Christianity is with him a practical, guiding, governing principle of conduct.

These, then, we conceive to be the elementary principles of what may be truly called experimental religion; first, that the great truths of Christianity must be heartily received as strong and distinct realities; second, that they must be embraced in their application to ourselves personally, as something in which we have a peculiar

concern; and third, that they must become principles of conduct, pervading the life, sanctifying the motives, and forming the habits of the soul. In this explanation of the subject, I think, we have the sanction alike of Scripture and of reason, and are unembarrassed by any thing of a fanatical or visionary nature.

From this statement, it is plain that experimental religion, taken in its true sense, is not to be acquired or finished by one effort or by one process. Some people talk of experiencing religion at a particular time, as if it were to be done but once, or all at once. This is certainly a very strange notion. We must experience religion, not once merely, or at a certain time, but every day and at all times; that is, religion must always be at our side, as our guide, counsellor, friend, and support. It must be interwoven with our whole moral and spiritual frame. It must enter into the composition of the character in all its parts, and not be *borne in* upon it, as a distinct, independent, foreign substance. It does not come at a particular moment, like the sudden arrival of a stranger, who merely takes up his abode with us, without feeling any interest in our every day business and pursuits; it is rather an unreserved and familiar friend, whose intimacy grows every day more close and dear, and who enters constantly and heartily into all the common cares and duties, which "the Providence of God hath adopted into the family of religion." In short, its true nature cannot be so well set forth, as in that beautiful description by our Saviour; "And he said, so is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he

knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

And now if you ask, how this experimental religion is to be acquired, the answer is, by the use of the means which God has appointed for the purpose. These means are the habitual study of the Scriptures, especially of the words of Jesus Christ, devout and heartfelt prayer, attendance upon the institutions and ordinances of the Gospel, the perusal of good books, a serious improvement of the events of God's providence, &c. Those afflictive dispensations, which bring our thoughts to a solemn pause, are our teachers; the examples of the good and the bad are our teachers; death is our teacher: and Christianity, properly understood, is a system of means for the formation of a holy character, for the purification of the heart, and the salvation of the soul. In all these ways is experimental religion to be acquired.

In saying this, I do not deny that spiritual influences from above are concerned in the production of a religious frame of mind. On the contrary, I believe most sincerely in those influences, when explained scripturally and rationally; but I do not believe that ecstacies, and visions, and vicissitudes of the animal spirits are those influences. The agency of the spirit of God comes to us now in the channel of appointed means, or coincides with the operation of these means, so as not to be distinguished from them. If it be not so, then the age of miracles has not, as is commonly supposed, gone by. Men are too apt to be dissatisfied with the moral constitution of things, as established by God. The regular means of religion seem tame and spiritless to diseased imaginations; they crave

something out of the common course, an inspiration from above pointed at the individual, a peculiar call, a privileged selection from the rest of mankind. But the Gospel bids us expect no such thing; and it deserves well to be considered by every one, whether the kind of religion, which is acquired in this way, be so likely to be strong, useful, and permanent,—in short, to be really *experimental religion*, as that, which has become engrained in the whole texture of the soul by a long and gradual process, is connected with every principle of moral action, and operates like a good leaven in the whole of the life and character. The celebrated Dr Owen, who was one of the most eminent champions of "orthodoxy" in his day, has well remarked that, "as water, that ariseth and floweth from a living spring, runneth equally and constantly, unless it be obstructed or diverted by some violent opposition, but that, which is from thunder-showers, runs furiously for a season, but is quickly dried up; so are those spiritual thoughts, which arise from a prevalent internal principle of grace in the heart; they are even and constant, unless an interruption be put upon them for a season by temptations; but those, which are excited by the thunder of convictions, however their streams may be filled for a season, quickly dry up and utterly decay."

Finally—We think that religion is experienced differently by different individuals; in some, by a more striking and rapid operation of the means of grace, than ordinary; in others, by a gradual and quiet incorporation of Christianity into the soul from childhood to old age. The remark has been made, and it is an excellent one, that "we should neither prescribe our personal experiences and feelings as a rule for others, nor make the experiences and feelings of

others a law to us." We do not think that experimental religion is showy and noisy, that it seeks public exhibitions, and is not satisfied till it has been registered before the world, or that it loves to blow a trumpet, or hang out a flag; for we are accustomed to believe that quick and ostentatious effects are not generally the best effects, nor the only true indications of the progress of real Christianity, nor the only sure evidences of the blessing of Heaven upon a pastor's labors. We do not deem that sort of commotion to be very desirable, in the confusion of which the mind mistakes the glow of emotion for permanent piety, and the fervors of imagination for signs of grace; for we have seen enough to convince us that the whole soul may be smitten down in fear and despair, or lifted up with swelling raptures, without any impressions being produced, which are permanently religious. We think ourselves justified in supposing it to be spiritual pride, rather that an experience of religion, which leads men to speak of their fellow Christians as children of darkness and of wrath, to pity the whole world besides themselves, to regard and to talk of the inclosures, within which their sects have fenced themselves, as a kind of privileged Goshen, and to thank God, with a very strange sort of gratitude, that he has made them so much wiser and holier than other human beings. We do not think, that an experimental acquaintance with Christianity requires us to make boastful comparisons of ourselves with others, nor to point the finger of reproach at such of our fellow men, as do not see with our eyes on religious subjects. But we do believe, that *experimental religion* is a religion which is seated in the heart, and sends out thence its influences on the life; that it is a principle of internal purity and

heavenly mindedness ; that it is something very different from that pretended religion which enlightens perhaps, but does not warm ; very different from that empty form of Christianity which floats around the heart, without ever becoming a sanctifying power, and which leaves men with a name to live, yet dead ; that it brings the truths of the Gospel home to the bosoms and consciences of mankind, and thus awakens the sinner from the sleep of spiritual death and animates the saint to a still better progress in the Christian course ; that its essence is in that faith which works by love, without which it is impossible to please God, and in that holy life, which to use the words of a pious writer—"is the only perfection of repentance, and the firm ground upon which we can cast the anchor of hope in the mercies of God through Jesus Christ." Such we conceive Experimental Religion to be ; and our prayer, and we trust our labor is, that it "may have free course, and be glorified."

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ON

THE DOCTRINE

OF TWO NATURES IN

JESUS CHRIST.

BY ALVAN LAMSON.

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DOCTRINE OF TWO NATURES

IN

JESUS CHRIST.

The doctrine of the Trinity is embarrassed with numerous difficulties, and these difficulties multiply and strengthen, in proportion as its several parts and appendages are brought distinctly into view. The hypothesis of two natures in Jesus Christ we deem one of its heaviest encumbrances. The trinity supposes the truth of this hypothesis; it may be said, in fact, to rest upon it as its basis, and with it must stand or fall. This circumstance has not, we fear, received the attention it deserves. It is true that the advocates for the strict and proper unity of the Divine Being, have occasionally argued from the absurdity of ascribing to an individual a finite and an infinite nature, but the argument has not been urged with due frequency and earnestness. For ourselves, we place great reliance upon it; it has a force, we think, which is not easily resisted; and could we bring no other, we should consider this alone sufficient to put the question of the truth or falsehood of opposite views at rest for ever.

Let us carefully weigh the doctrine of a double nature in Jesus Christ; let us see to what it amounts, and take a view of some of the chief objections to it. But first, let us glance at its origin and history in the early ages of the church.

We gather from ancient records, that the great bulk of plain unlettered believers, who derived their knowledge of Christianity from its first preachers and their immediate successors, viewed Jesus as a finite and dependent being. That this is true of the whole body of Jewish Christians, during their existence as a church, admits of no doubt. The *uneducated* Gentile converts, whose minds were not fettered by the prejudices of learning, partook of the same views. The doctrine of Christ's proper divinity appears to have encountered from them the sternest opposition; they dreaded it on account of its supposed impiety, thinking, that it infringed on the supremacy of the Father, and it was not till it had sustained severe and protracted struggles, that it finally obtained currency.

The *learned* converts from Paganism are entitled to the credit of introducing it. These converts, several of them at least, came fresh from the schools of Alexandria in Egypt, where they had become deeply imbued with the doctrines of the later Platonists, and on embracing Christianity took along with them the sentiments there imbibed. The consequence was, that as early as the former part of the second century, the religion of Jesus began to be corrupted, and its simple truths became disfigured, by an unnatural union with a speculative and earth-born philosophy.

Justin Martyr, A. D. 140, led the way by transferring

the Platonic doctrine of the divine reason (logos) to Christianity. This reason, originally considered an attribute of the Father, he converted into a proper person, making it to constitute the divine nature of Jesus. The first step having been taken, further innovations followed, and the work of corruption soon went on apace. It was aided in its progress by Clemens of Alexandria, A. D. 192, and especially by Origen, A. D. 230, a man of subtle and fervid genius, but of an extravagant imagination, and weak judgment, and a very prolific writer. The fame of Origen attracted numerous followers, who, afterwards dispersing into various parts, "everywhere," to use an expression of the learned Brucker, "sowed the field of God with tares."

The doctrine of the trinity, however, as explained by the Fathers of the first three centuries, we feel authorized to say, was very different from the modern orthodox doctrine. The perfect equality of the Son with the Father they never dreamed of asserting. Justin Martyr, as the complexion of his whole language testifies, evidently held the belief of his strict and proper inferiority; and such seems to have been the faith of all the christian writers of any celebrity before the Council of Nice, A. D. 325. It is unnecessary to adduce passages in corroboration of this statement, as its truth has been admitted by several learned trinitarians best acquainted with the writings of christian antiquity. Among those who have conceded it fully, or in substance, it is sufficient to mention the learned Jesuit Petavius, and Cudworth, the profound author of the "Intellectual System," both orthodox authorities.

The Fathers of the Council of Nice asserted the di-

vinity of the Son, but not his individual identity with the Father. He was *consubstantial*, as they expressed it, with the Father, that is, as they understood it, was in all respects similar, partook of the same *specific* nature, though not of the same *numerical essence;* as one man is of the same substance, or species, with another, though possessing distinct individuality. The Councils of Ephesus, A. D. 431, and Chalcedon, A. D. 451, occasioned by the controversies of the Nestorians and Eutychians, the former of whom were accused of dividing the person, and the latter of confounding the natures, of Jesus Christ, appear to have succeeded but little better than that of Nice in defining his divinity, though they undertook to determine the nature and results of its union with humanity. The Council of Chalcedon, particularly, claims the merit of having ascertained and settled the doctrine of the incarnation, which, according to its creed, is in substance as follows. *Jesus Christ is truly God and man, perfect in both natures, consubstantial with the Father with respect to his divinity, and consubstantial with us with respect to his humanity; the two natures, the divine and human, are indissolubly united in him without confusion or change, each retaining all its former attributes, yet so united as to form one person.*

The doctrine of the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ, as held by the orthodox of succeeding ages, and received by trinitarians of the present day, does not differ in any important particulars from that established by the council of Chalcedon, except, perhaps, that the term *consubstantial*, which the Fathers of that council, to preserve consistency, must have explained to mean only a *specific*, would be under-

stood by the moderns to express an individual or *numerical* identity.

Dr Barrow, one of the most distinguished of the old English divines, thus expresses himself on the subject. "We may, with the holy Fathers, and particularly with the great council of Chalcedon, assert, that in the incarnation of our Lord, the two natures, the divine and human, were united, without any confusion or commixtion; for such a way of blending would induce a third nature different from both; such a commixtion being supposed, our Lord would be neither God nor man, but another third kind of substance, that would destroy, diminish, or alter the properties of each; which is unsound to say, and impossible to be; wherefore both natures in this mystery do subsist entire, distinct, and unconfused, each retaining its essential and natural properties."

After some further remarks of a similar character, he adds, "The natures were joined undividedly;—there is but one *Christ*, one person, to whom, being God, and being man, are truly and properly attributed."

"The same person never ceased to be both God and man; not even then, when our Lord as man did undergo death; for he raised himself from the dead, he reared the temple of his own body, being fallen; as being God, he was able to raise himself, as being man, he was capable of being raised by himself; the union between God and man persisting, when the union between human body and soul was dissolved."*

The church of England, following in the steps of the unreformed Catholic church, determines that, "the Son —took man's nature—so that two whole and perfect na-

* Barrow's Works, Vol. ii. p. 255. Ed. 1716.

tures, that is to say, the Godhead and manhood were joined together in one person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man." Art. sec.—It is added by an expositor, "the essential properties of one nature were not communicated to the other nature —each kept his respective properties distinct, without the least confusion in their most intimate union."*

"In whatever way," says Professor Stuart, "the union of the two natures was effected, it neither destroyed nor essentially changed either the divine or the human nature." He supposes Christ to be "God omniscient and omnipotent; and still a feeble man of imperfect knowledge."

It is unnecessary to add more to show what the received opinion on this subject is.—The doctrine of the union of the two natures in the person of Jesus Christ, in the form in which it is stated in the above extracts, is admitted, as far as we know, by all genuine trinitarians. No one of them doubts that Christ was perfect man; no one of them professes to doubt that he was also perfect God. According to this doctrine, when fairly stated, an infinite nature with all its essential attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, necessary and everlasting existence, incapable of suffering or change, was indissolubly united in the person of Jesus Christ, with a finite nature, with all its properties, as imperfect knowledge, weakness, exposure to sorrow, pain, and death, in such a manner, that the two natures remain for ever distinct, each retaining unaltered all its former attributes.

Now to this extraordinary doctrine we have several strong objections. Before proceeding to state them,

* Prettyman, Elements of Christian Theology, Vol. ii.

however, we will pause to make one observation suggested by the foregoing narrative. It is this: There is a strong antecedent probability, that the doctrine will be found, upon examination, to be equally unsupported by scripture and by reason. It appears from ecclesiastical history that the simple and unlearned Christians of the earlier and purer ages of the church knew nothing about it; that the first traces of it are found among the learned Platonizing converts; that its features were at first rude and imperfect; that it from time to time received modifications and additions as the disciples of the Egyptian philosophy, the most absurd that ever disgraced the human intellect, flowed into the church; that it was long opposed on account of its antichristian tendency; that so late as the end of the third century, it had not succeeded in eradicating from the minds of the generality of Christians, learned or unlearned, the great doctrine of the inferior and derived nature of the Son; and finally, that it gathered strength and was matured amid storms of controversy, at a time when the principles of sound criticism and just reasoning had fallen into contempt. That such a doctrine, growing up with the worst philosophy of the worst times, should originally have sprung from the bosom of Christianity, and not from the vicious systems of human speculation, in the midst of which it was nurtured, that it should have remained hidden for years in the records of our Saviour's instructions, and the writings of his apostles, and its existence there not have been suspected till the Alexandrian Platonists pointed it out, is a supposition altogether too extravagant for credit. Its late rise, in union with the philosophical jargon of the age, to which it was wedded, and from which it was con-

tempt to borrow its terms and illustrations, renders it difficult, if not impossible, for us to believe, that it was one of the truths, which either our Saviour or his apostles were commissioned to impart to the world. In tracing its history, indeed, we gather, at every step, evidence of its human and earthly origin.

Our principal objections to the orthodox distinction of two natures in Jesus Christ are, that it involves an absurdity; that it destroys the personal unity of Jesus, and introduces strange perplexity into our conceptions of his character; that it exposes him to the charge of equivocation and dishonesty; that it destroys the efficacy of his example, and nullifies his instructions; that it is unnecessary, and fails of the object for which it is alleged to be wanted; that it thus carries with it irresistible evidence of its falsehood, it bears all the marks of a most improbable and extravagant fiction; and finally, that after the most careful search, we find no traces of it in the sacred writings.

In the first place, we think that the doctrine of two natures in Jesus Christ, as held by its advocates, is absurd, and consequently that no evidence whatever would be sufficient to establish it. Before we believe it, we must abandon the use of our understandings; we must free ourselves from a disposition to weigh evidence; we must have the convenient pliancy of mind, the happy facility of belief, to which the good father had attained, when he said, "I believe, because it is impossible." If we reflect for a moment on the qualities of the divine and human natures, we must, one would think, be convinced, that they can never be united in the same mind or person. They are absolutely incompatible with

each other; they cannot possibly exist together in the same intelligent agent. What are the attributes of the divine and human natures? God is infinite, everlasting, immutable, omnipotent, omniscient, and infallible. Man is finite, limited in knowledge and power, weak, erring, subject to vicissitude, disease, and death. Now, let any one, who ventures to use his understanding, say whether these qualities are compatible with each other. For ourselves, we think they are such, that their union in the same being is naturally impossible. It is the union of infinite and finite, of knowledge and ignorance, of power and weakness, of perfection and imperfection. We may as well talk of the union of light and darkness, or of any two qualities, of which the one necessarily implies the negation or absence of the other.

What is the consequence of the union of divine and human attributes in the same mind or being, on the supposition, admitted by trinitarians, that the two natures remain distinct, none of the qualities of either being lost or changed? Why, that a being may be at the same time infinite and finite; that he may be omnipotent, yet partake of weakness and infirmity, and be unable of himself to do all things; that he may be omniscient, yet be ignorant of many things; that he may be the Author of the universe, yet a wailing infant, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger; a being incapable of pain and suffering, yet a man of sorrows, who expired on the cross, was placed in a shroud, and slept in the tomb. Now if this be not contradiction and absurdity, we confess we know not what contradiction and absurdity are.

We do not think our opponents very fortunate in their

attempts to illustrate the doctrine of two natures in Jesus Christ by comparison. Thus we are told, that for an explanation of it we must look into ourselves, and consider the union of soul and body in man; "for as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ." Such is the language of the Athanasian creed. The comparison it suggests has been a favorite one with the assertors of the theological doctrine of the incarnation, from the time this doctrine came into vogue to the present day. That such has been the fact, we think a remarkable instance of the effect of hereditary prejudices in blinding the understanding, and of the lamentable weakness of human nature, which induces men to listen to flimsy argument and mere sophistry, when employed in the support of received opinions.

The comparison of the two natures of Jesus Christ with the union of spirit and body in ourselves, may serve to introduce confusion and darkness into a person's ideas, in consequence of which he may lose sight of the absurdity of the hypothesis, which it is meant to illustrate;—perhaps he may think, that he has, at length, hit upon a parallel, which solves all difficulties. But a little sober reflection, we think, must abate his confidence. To us the two cases appear totally dissimilar. Man is a complex being, very different from that compound being, which Christ is represented by our adversaries to be. If you admit the common distinction, and say that man is made up of matter and spirit, and then inquire what is his nature, the only general and intelligible answer to this inquiry is, that it is those properties, corporeal and mental, which result from his constitution and physical organization; that is, all those qualities, which con-

stitute him what in his present state he is. Now it cannot be said, that any of these qualities are incompatible with others. There is nothing in any of them, which makes it a contradiction or absurdity to suppose, that they may all exist together in the same subject. You may, indeed, affirm of a part, what is not true of the whole of man. You may say of his body, that it has extension and solidity, and attribute to his mind perception, memory, judgment; but here is no contradiction. You do not attribute to him, as an *individual* or *whole*, opposite qualities. You do not ascribe to his *person* qualities or acts so utterly repugnant, that one necessarily excludes the other, as light excludes darkness, or omnipotence, weakness. Our objection to the union of two natures in the person of Jesus Christ, is, that it brings together an assemblage of qualities, which are incompatible with each other; that it ascribes to Christ, as an *individual* or *person*, properties between which there is such an utter repugnance, such direct opposition, that they cannot exist together in the same subject. Trinitarians affirm, that Christ is perfect God and perfect man; consequently he must have all the qualities of both, as omnipotence and weakness, infallibility and fallibility, infinite knowledge and limited and partial information; and these qualities are affirmed of him in a *personal character*. Man presents no phenomenon resembling this; no such combination of incongruous and opposite qualities.

To say of Christ, that he is divine and human, infinite and finite, omnipotent and weak, is to assert nothing more strange or mysterious, it is contended, than to affirm of man that he is mortal and immortal. But the fallacy of this statement is quite obvious. The expres-

sions in question do not belong to the same class, nor have they any real, but only a seeming resemblance. When we say that man is mortal and immortal, we do not employ terms, which, in the connexion in which they stand, have any opposition or repugnance; they are not, in fact, opposites; they convey no incompatible ideas. What we affirm in one part of the proposition we do not deny in the other. By the assertion, man is mortal, we mean that his present mode of existence will cease, and by the assertion that he is immortal, we mean that he will continue in being for ever. The two assertions are distinct, but not opposed. We affirm simply that man will undergo a change at death, but that this change will not amount to an absolute annihilation of his being, and in this proposition there is nothing contradictory or absurd.—A similar explanation may be given of numerous other propositions, in which the same thing is *apparently* affirmed and denied of the same subject. The terms in different parts of the proposition either change their signification, or they are used in senses not really, but only apparently opposed. The same solution, however, does not apply to the proposition, Christ is finite and infinite, for the terms here employed are by their nature wholly opposed, and undergo no change of signification in the different parts of the proposition. We affirm, in one breath, that he is finite and not finite, God and not God, the terms, the whole time, being used in the same sense, and thus fall into as palpable a contradiction as could be uttered.

We object, in the second place, to the doctrine of the two natures in Jesus Christ, as held by trinitarians, that it destroys his personal unity; that it makes him

two distinct persons, two beings. It is not necessary for us here to go into the metaphysical inquiry, in what personality consists. Our common apprehensions are sufficient to guide us. A person is an intelligent agent; he has one will and one consciousness; he has perceptions and feelings, which he may properly call his own. Now we maintain, that personality, thus explained, simple, undivided personality, and individuality, belonged to Jesus as truly and properly, as it belongs to any other being. We maintain, that he is really one—one mind, one person, one being, having one undivided consciousness, in a word, that he is one in the same sense in which either of us is one. This we hold to be a fundamental and self-evident truth, and we think, that any hypothesis or view, which is subversive of it, a hypothesis, which divides Christ, makes him two persons, two beings, as separate and distinct as any two of us are, bears the stamp of error on its very face. This consequence, we hesitate not to say, is chargeable on the views entertained by trinitarians concerning the divine and human natures of Christ. They assign to him two entire and distinct minds; the one infinitely superior to the human, having distinct properties, views and perceptions, having, in fact, nothing in common with human nature; the other, human, having a will, perceptions, and feelings exclusively its own. This surely makes Christ two persons, if we understand anything about personality; and two as far removed from each other as infinite from finite. He possesses, we are informed, proper and supreme divinity united with a human soul, perfect and entire in all its capacities and affections. He is God and man. Now God is an intelligent agent; the human mind of Christ another intelligent agent; each nature,

we are told, retains its proper attributes,—"the essential properties of one are not imparted to the other." How it is possible to escape the conclusion, that here are two intelligent agents, two persons, we acknowledge we are unable to conjecture. It is really matter of astonishment to us, that any one, who reflects at all on the subject, does not perceive the insuperable difficulties, which the hypothesis of two natures presents, with regard to the personal unity of the Saviour.

Trinitarians do not hesitate to ascribe to each of the two supposed natures of Jesus Christ qualities strictly personal. They sometimes speak of him as having the essential attributes of God—as performing what God alone can perform; at other times, they describe him as having the perceptions, and all the sinless infirmities of man; as being tempted and exposed to suffering, as we are. It appears surprising, that they do not perceive that in doing this, they make him two beings as distinct from each other, as any two of their fellow mortals are, and as remote as God is from man. It is true that formally, and in words, they ascribe to him undivided personality. Thus the council of Ephesus decided in opposition to Nestorius, that the two natures in Jesus Christ form one person. But this, we have seen, is an impossible supposition; the two natures necessarily form two separate and entire agents, each possessing proper individuality and consciousness; and as long as each nature retains its peculiar properties and affections, they must remain two—two individuals, persons, agents. No human decrees can alter the nature of things. Truth is truth, and falsehood is falsehood, whether men perceive it or not. Councils may vote, that two is one, that two minds and two agents,

form one mind, and one agent, but what then? Can their votes render that true, which is by the nature of things impossible or absurd?

The importance of preserving the strict and proper unity of Jesus Christ, and the strange confusion and absurdity, which would result from a belief of his divided personality and two-fold being, will, and consciousness, would authorize us to dwell longer on this topic. But on so plain a point it seems difficult to speak without becoming trite. To resort to any labored argument, or abstract process of reasoning, to prove that two minds, a finite and infinite, divine and human, supposed to be lodged in the same fleshly tabernacle, yet retaining each its original, distinct, and proper attributes, necessarily form two,—two persons, two beings, two agents, would seem a foolish waste of time and labor. A simple statement of the point in debate appears, in our view, all that is needed. Let the doctrine of the two natures, in its received form, be fairly explained, we think we may safely appeal to any person of a plain and unprejudiced mind, and ask whether such a doctrine can possibly be true. No argument seems necessary to its refutation. It carries evidence of its falsehood on its very front. The fact that it violates the personal unity of the Saviour, assigning to him a double individuality, if we may so express ourselves, making him in reality two beings, in the same sense in which God and any one of his intelligent and finite offspring are two, at once, and fully condemns it.

Our next objection is of a graver character. The doctrine we are examining, implicates, as we conceive,

the moral character of our Saviour, impeaches his veracity, and attributes to him deceit, equivocation, and falsehood. This is a very weighty charge. We cannot endure to hear the name of Jesus, even by supposition, coupled with fraud and dishonesty. We regard him as "holy, harmless, and undefiled," in a sense in which no other being who has ever trodden our earth, has a claim to be called such. The purity of his mind could not be surpassed; it was entire and perfect, partaking of the brightness of divinity. An inflexible love of truth, an openness, and beautiful and majestic simplicity, were among the most striking features of his character. For these features, for his purity, his ingenuousness, and his truth, we reverence him, and would combat with our whole strength whatever views tend to impair or destroy this reverence. We hold a belief of his integrity among our firmest, fondest persuasions, and this belief nothing would tempt us to resign. To be compelled to abandon it, to have our confidence in the pure character of Jesus of Nazareth shaken, and be forced to conclude, that in imparting his doctrines to the world, and even in his hours of familiar intercourse with his disciples, he made use of deceit, or mental reservation, would cause us insupportable gloom and anguish. We object to the doctrine of the two natures, that it wrests from us this precious persuasion,—a persuasion of his entire sincerity and explicitness.

Let it not be said, that the doctrine is not chargeable with any such consequence. It is, according to every view we can take of it, justly chargeable with it. Thus we are told that Jesus sometimes spoke and acted in his human, and sometimes in his divine nature; that when

he said, that he could of himself do nothing, he meant, that as man he could do nothing, although as God he could do all things; when he declared, that he knew not the day and hour of judgment, we are to understand by this declaration, that he was ignorant of it as man, although he knew it perfectly well as God. Now this, we affirm, is precisely what, in a fellow mortal, we should call, by the mildest term, equivocation. It is absolutely inconsistent with that openness and integrity which we are authorized, by the laws of social intercourse, to expect from each other. When one affirms that he does not know a thing, he means, if he is an honest man, that he does not know it in any way whatever. It is vain for him to allege, that he knows it only in a certain character, that he is ignorant of it as man; as if a priest should declare, that he is ignorant of a fact as man, though he knows it as confessor; or a person should affirm, that as a corporeal being, he is ignorant of what as an intelligent or spiritual being he knows well enough. This will not save him from the charge of equivocation or falsehood. Let us beware of ascribing to Christ conduct which would be thought disingenuous or immoral in a fellow mortal. If he did not deceive, if he made the ordinary use of language, he could not declare, that he was ignorant of what he knew in any manner whatever. It is a poor subterfuge to say, that he was ignorant of it in his human, though he knew it in his divine nature. No matter in what way he knew it; if he knew it in either nature, he knew it in a *personal* capacity, *his person including both natures;* that is, he knew it in an absolute sense; and could not then, with reason or truth, declare his ignorance of it. Would his disciples, or those who

heard him, suspect him of any reservation, or of using equivocal language? Would they not suppose, that when he told them he did not know or could not do a thing, his words were to be understood in their ordinary sense? If they were used in any uncommon sense, which he took no care to point out, how can he be defended from the charge of having made a deceitful use of language?

If words have any fixed meaning, our Saviour expressly disclaims the possession of any attributes strictly and properly divine: as omnipotence—*I can of my own self do nothing:* supreme, infinite goodness—*Why callest thou* ME GOOD? *there is none good but* ONE, *that is* GOD: omniscience—*Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, neither the* SON, *but the Father.* This is plain language; there is no mystery or obscurity in it. The terms, *I*, *me*, *self*, as every one knows, always denote an *individual* or *person*, and they include the whole of that person; they are not appropriated to any part or member of such person; they comprehend all which goes to constitute him what he is, viewed as an individual or whole. In this sense our Saviour must have used them, or he must have been guilty of manifest prevarication. To say that by *self* he meant only the inferior part of his nature, and intended to assert only, that this part was not truly divine, or did not possess, inherently and of itself, infinite power and knowledge, is to make him express himself, as no honest man, not bereft of his sober senses, ever did or ever would.

Again, we are accustomed to look to Jesus as affording an example of deep, confiding, and submissive piety, manifested in all his words and actions, and especially by

frequent and earnest prayer; and we object to the doctrine of his supreme divinity, that it destroys the force of this example. Indeed, upon the supposition that he was truly God, we are unable to comprehend what is meant by those expressions of dependence and trust, which constantly fell from his lips. Are we to understand by them, that, in his human, he felt dependent on his divine nature? that one part of himself leaned for support on another part of himself? Had this been his meaning, he would certainly have chosen language better fitted to convey it. Once more: what construction are we to put on his prayers? To whom were they directed? Will you say, that in his human nature, he prayed to his divine? in one part of his person to another part of it? Or, as the second person of the trinity, did he pray to the first person of the trinity? As the second of three "somewhats," or three "distinctions," all equal, existing in the same being, did he pray to the first of those "distinctions," or "somewhats," for both these terms are employed by trinitarians? If he was the infinite God incarnate, his prayers must either have been addressed to one of three persons or distinctions in one being, by another of the persons or distinctions in the same being; so that the *being* who prays, and the *being* to whom the prayer is addressed, are the same; or they must have been addressed to the divine part of his person by the human part of it; so that the *person* who prays, and the *person* to whom the prayer is addressed, are the same. One of these two suppositions the Trinitarian is compelled to adopt; and we know not which of them is the more absurd. Both of them render Christ's devotions unintelligible, and deprive us of the legacy of his precious example.

Further, we think that the doctrine of two natures in Jesus Christ, as influencing the laws of interpretation, throws the utmost darkness and obscurity over the sacred writings. We consider it a plain truth, that the Bible is to be interpreted in precisely the same way with other ancient writings. We are to ascertain the sense of it by the same process that we employ to ascertain the sense of any work, which we attempt to read. On any other supposition it is perfectly unintelligible; and the fact, that it was unintelligible, would force us to conclude, at once, that it had no claims to a divine character. If God condescends, by messengers and prophets, to instruct men on subjects connected with their most important interests, we may be certain, that he will cause the information which he thinks fit to communicate, to be conveyed through a medium capable of being understood; that is, the messengers he employs must use language in the ordinary way; they must observe those established laws and usages, from which no writer, who wishes to be understood, on whatever subject he treats, ventures to depart. We cannot suppose, that he would so far sport with his creatures, as to present the instruction he professes to impart, in a form which would render it useless, by preventing it from being understood.—We complain of the doctrine of the two natures, as explained by its friends, that it leaves us in the utmost doubt about the sense of revelation; that it makes the New Testament a book wholly unlike all others; that it renders it necessary for us to judge of the meaning of it, therefore, as we judge of that of no other book ancient or modern. The consequence is, we can never be certain, that we understand the facts or observations recorded by the historians of our

Lord. The impressions which we receive concerning the most important of them, may be entirely erroneous. It is not pretended, that our Lord on any occasion intimated in which of his two capacities, the divine or human, he spoke or acted. He nowhere observes, this I say as man, or this I say as God. He has not thrown out the least hint, by which we may be guided in determining what is to be ascribed to one nature, and what to the other. Nor is this deficiency supplied by the historians of his life. They have left on record nothing by which we may be assisted in deciding in which nature he at any time spoke or acted. No caution is used by them to prevent misconception. No care is taken to guard their readers against taking the words of their Master in their literal and obvious sense, when he disclaims the attributes of the Infinite Father. This is strange, it is wholly unaccountable, on the supposition that they understood him in the sense in which trinitarians would have us believe they did. It is an omission we cannot explain, and one which may be attended with fatal consequences, for it exposes us to perpetual error in our attempts to find the sense of our Lord's words. A more than oracular obscurity hangs over the sacred pages; they may mean anything, or everything, according to the prejudices and fancy of the reader, and there is no end to the absurdities they may be made to teach.

In fact, upon the principle of interpretation adopted by trinitarians, the plainest assertions of our Saviour may be invalidated, nor could he have denied that he possessed supreme divinity, in language, the force of which might not have been evaded. Let us suppose that instead of saying *my Father is greater than I—I can of*

myself do nothing—My doctrine is not mine but his that sent me, he had asserted expressly, *I am not the supreme God—I am not the same being with the Father, who commissioned and sent me;* we have only to affirm, in order to set aside the evidence of these latter assertions, that they have reference only to his human nature—that they are true of him as man only. The two classes of assertions admit of a common construction; if the former do not teach that the Son is inferior to the Father and distinct from him, neither do the latter, nor is it in the power of words to express it; and had our Saviour been commissioned to inculcate it, he must have sought in vain for language, which the ingenuity of men might not have distorted into a sense entirely foreign from that he intended to convey.

We do not, upon mature reflection, perceive in what manner the above mentioned objection can be obviated, without abandoning the doctrine of two natures. We know it is said, that we must determine whether Christ's human or divine nature is referred to by what is affirmed of it, according to the maxim of the schools, "*the subject is known by its predicate.*" Thus with regard to the assertions, "my Father is greater than I," "I can of my own self do nothing," "of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only," and those in which Jesus is described as praying to the Father, being exalted, and receiving from him a name above every name, and others of a similar character, we are told that they refer to Christ not in a personal capacity, but in one of his natures only, that is, his human. But in what manner this strange inference is authorized by the maxim alluded to, we confess

ourselves unable to discover. It appears to us to be founded on a disregard of the plain and obvious force of expressions in themselves quite simple and intelligible. If language is capable of a definite sense, and we know anything about the laws of reasoning, the legitimate inference to be drawn from the above mentioned assertions is, that Jesus is inferior to the Father, not as to a part, but the whole, of his nature; that is, he is so in an absolute unqualified sense. There is nothing in what is affirmed concerning him, which necessarily requires the subject to be taken in a restrained sense; nothing in the nature of the expressions employed, which limits them to a part of this subject. These expressions, in their most obvious sense, are not repugnant to reason, nor, we think, to the general train of facts and arguments found in the Scriptures, and do not therefore require to be restricted. To restrain them by supposing, that they are appropriated only to one part of Christ's nature, that they are not true when affirmed of him absolutely or generally, is really to put on them a construction altogether unnecessary and manifestly forced.—A doctrine, which is supported by a mode of interpretation, which would convert the Bible into an inexplicable book, and render all human language dark and uncertain, we need not add, cannot be true.

Let us next advert to some of the supposed uses of the doctrine. Its advocates consider it important, first, as furnishing a solution of some difficulties arising from the apparently discordant language used by the sacred writers with reference to Christ, who sometimes, as they admit, speak of him as a finite and derived being, and sometimes, they contend, employ expressions, which imply the possession of a divine nature and divine attributes. The most ready method of solving these difficulties, they tell

us, is to suppose that he possessed not one nature, but two, a derived and underived, a finite and infinite, a human and a divine. This supposition, it is urged, makes all plain; it furnishes a key, by the help of which, the treasures of hidden wisdom, locked up in the inspired volume, may be laid open, so that all may be partakers.

To this statement it might be sufficient to reply, that the hypothesis in question, as we have shown, is liable to insuperable objections, especially that it supposes a principle of interpretation, which mystifies language, and makes the Bible utter uncertain or delusive sounds. But we are prepared to meet the argument on different ground. We maintain, that the difficulties alluded to are greatly exaggerated; that the greater part, if not all of them, may be fully removed by the application of those rules of criticism, which we think ourselves authorised to apply in the explanation of all other writings; and the hypothesis of the two natures is not therefore needed for their solution.

Our views on the subject of its necessity, as affecting apparent discrepancies in the language of the New Testament, may be stated in few words. We consider the fact, that Jesus Christ is a being distinct from the Father, and inferior to him, completely established, by the general strain of the Bible. No fact or sentiment is more plainly, explicitly, and forcibly taught and inculcated. Take the following among numerous other testimonies equally express, which might be quoted. "This is life eternal, that they might know *thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*" John xvii. 3. "But to us there is but *one God, the Father*, of whom are all things, and we in him; and *one Lord*, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." 1 Cor. viii. 6. "There is *one God*, and *one mediator between*

God and men, the man Christ Jesus." 1 Tim. ii. 5. At the same time we admit, that there are a few passages capable of receiving a construction, which favors the trinitarian supposition; but they do not, we conceive, necessarily require this construction; they admit of being understood differently, without appearing to be forced from their natural sense. We think that without departing from the established laws of criticism, we are able to explain them in a manner consistent with the views which we are led, from the general tenor of the language of the New Testament, to form of the Saviour. We conceive, that nothing is there said of him, which may not be said of a being inferior in his whole nature to God. Language occurs there, which is sometimes figurative, and sometimes partakes of the nature of rhetorical description; it is partly popular, and requires, therefore, to be restrained and modified; and partly the language of feeling and sentiment, which is necessarily somewhat indefinite. It is not surprising, that some of this language should at first view occasion embarrassment, and that some expressions are met with, which admit of being understood in different senses. It would be strange if they conveyed the same sentiment, or shades of sentiment, to all minds. We are persuaded, however, that they are susceptible of a construction, which is in unison with our views of the person and rank of the Saviour, and therefore think the hypothesis of two natures unnecessary.

It is always easy to gather, from the general cast of an author's writings, and the mode in which he ordinarily expresses himself, if he is accustomed to think and write with any tolerable accuracy, what are his leading views on the subject of which he treats. These views will be

brought forward distinctly; they will, probably, be frequently adverted to, and be presented with great prominence. Passages, however, may occur in his writings, the meaning of which is less clear, passages, perhaps, which understood in their literal and obvious sense, and without reference to the trains of reflection into which they enter, may appear to militate with the views and principles we are led by the general import of his language to ascribe to him. Now what is the process, which common courtesy, and the laws of sound criticism, authorize and require us to pursue with regard to such passages? How are we to regard them? Are we to consider them of chief importance in our attempts to ascertain our author's meaning? Are we to select them as proof texts? Are we to erect systems on them? Are we to appeal to them as the passages, which best express the real views of the writer? Are we, by exalting the letter above the spirit, to make them utter sentiments at war with those breathed, perhaps, from every page of his productions? No. We do not proceed thus in the interpretation of any human author. We do not expect to draw important proofs and illustrations from the more obscure and mystical expressions a writer may sometimes employ. We do not always remain satisfied with the meaning, which first offers itself, on meeting with such expressions. If, according to their most obvious construction, they appear repugnant to common sense, and the prevailing tone of the writings, in which they occur, we feel compelled to suppose, that we have not found their true signification, and we seek some other, which is in harmony with reason, and with the known opinions of the author.

On this principle we proceed in the interpretation of the Bible. We conceive, that obscure and ambiguous

terms and phrases, which seldom occur, must bend to its prevailing language and spirit; the more difficult parts must be explained by the more easy, figurative by plain, the more abstruse by the more simple. From the manner in which our Saviour and his apostles usually express themselves, when they speak without metaphor; from the views and illustrations to which they most frequently recur; from observations and assertions often reiterated, we must endeavor to ascertain what their real sentiments were; what the great and fundamental doctrines they received and were anxious to inculcate. In interpreting the more dark and mysterious expressions, which are occasionally met with in their discourses and writings, we must adopt a meaning, which harmonizes with those doctrines, though it may not always be such as the natural force of the expressions employed would most readily suggest. This is reasonable; common sense and common justice, in fact, require it of us. Now the simple and proper inferiority of the Son to the Father, we think, is inculcated, and echoed, and reechoed, from Matthew to the Revelations, and is not, therefore, to be set aside by a few expressions, which, taken literally, and apart from others, with which they stand connected, may appear to suggest a different conclusion. Such expressions, we feel under the necessity of supposing, are to be received with some modification and restriction. They are few in number, and the evidence derived from them comparatively of little weight at most. Allowing it its full force, it is insufficient to overthrow or materially weaken the immense mass of proofs, which are brought to establish the fact, that Jesus partook of a finite and derived nature and attributes, and of no other.

Further, the advocates for the two fold nature of Christ,

allege that their views are attended with some advantages as regards the atonement. A wide field of remark is here opened, but we must confine ourselves to one or two observations. To the popular doctrine of a satisfaction or substitute, we object, that it robs God of his moral and paternal attributes; that instead of calming our apprehensions and relieving distrust, therefore, it only serves to aggravate our fears, and wrap nature in gloom. But waiving this and numerous other objections, which might be urged, we shall simply point out one fallacy, which wholly invalidates the argument for Christ's divinity from the supposed necessity of an exalted victim, a fallacy which has been often enough exposed, but is not yet abandoned. Sin, it is asserted, since it is committed against an infinite Being, is an infinite evil, and deserves infinite punishment; and none but an infinite being is therefore capable of making atonement for it. This reasoning has in it so much palpable sophistry, that we may well be surprised it should ever be employed, or for a moment listened to. In the first place, nothing can be more illogical than to suppose, that sin, because committed against an infinite being, is an infinite offence. No act of a finite being can have a character of infinity. But throwing out of view this and similar considerations, which might be added, it is untrue that an infinite atonement has been made, even upon the hypothesis of trinitarians. Would they be understood to say, that the supreme and infinite God, the great Author and Preserver of nature, really suffered and died on the cross? that an omnipotent Being was put to death by children of dust? that the Creator perished by the hands of his creatures? that the world was left three days, during which Jesus lay in the grave, without a God, that the universe stood

without a Preserver? No. The bare supposition of such an event, if it were possible, would, in the highest degree, shock the feelings of every one. On the hypothesis then that Christ was God as well as man, he suffered only in his human nature. No infinite nature suffered. What then becomes of the infinite atonement? No such atonement has ever been made, even admitting that Christ united in himself the divine and human natures. On this supposition, it was man only that endured the cross; so that with regard to the doctrine of the atonement, a belief of the deity of Jesus has not the least advantage over a belief of his simple humanity.

One further difficulty with regard to the death of Christ, suggests itself, upon the hypothesis assumed by trinitarians. They are compelled to disown the conclusion, that the divine nature suffered; yet the divine and human natures, it is asserted, were indissolubly united in the person of the sufferer; and we are told expressly by Dr Barrow, that "the union did not cease, even when our Lord as man did undergo death"—that this union "persisted" when that "between human soul and body was dissolved." Here certainly appears to be occasion for some very nice distinctions—distinctions, we are afraid, much too refined for common minds. To a man of plain understanding it must appear somewhat paradoxical to say, that one of two natures indissolubly united in the same person, may with this person undergo death, while the other does not partake of suffering. It would seem that the union must be dissolved at death. But this is inadmissible upon the hypothesis of trinitarians; the union is indissoluble. We leave them to get rid of the consequences.

Some other advantages are occasionally described as

following from the union of two natures in Christ, which we do not deem of sufficient importance to be noticed.

If the objections stated in the foregoing pages, have any force, the doctrine of two natures in Jesus Christ is attended with difficulties vastly more embarrassing than those it professes to remove. Admitting the latter to be as great as they appear to the advocates of the doctrine, they amount we conceive, to this, and to nothing more—that apparently discordant expressions are occasionally found in the scriptures, which this doctrine reduces into harmony with each other—that the sacred writers, in speaking of Christ, use language, which appears consistent only on the supposition, that he possessed both a divine and a human nature. To remove apparent discrepancies an hypothesis is employed, which, according to the view we have taken of it, is full of contradictions; an hypothesis, which, as we have seen, is manifestly absurd and impossible; which violates the personal unity of Jesus; impeaches his veracity; and destroys the force of his example; mars the simplicity, and darkens the sense of the sacred writings, and which, after all, fails of its object, in the very point, where, if its friends are to be believed, it is most wanted, that is, the satisfaction or atonement. No hypothesis can be attended with greater inconveniences than this. Whatever difficulties we escape, we fall into greater, by adopting it. But we have stated that, in our view, no formidable difficulties arise from the forms of language alluded to; and that all alleged discrepancies disappear, when the expressions, which are supposed to imply them, are understood in the sense they manifestly bear. We see not the least necessity, then, for the supposition of two natures in Christ, even were the difficulties attending it fewer than they are.

The above mentioned objections are enough to stamp on the doctrine under consideration the character of error. We have, however, one further objection, and it is our last. We have examined the doctrine in its several parts and bearings, and followed it out into some of its obvious consequences, and have seen, that it carries on the face of it evidence of having originated in human invention. We should be surprised to find any support for such a doctrine in the scriptures. We venerate them too much to believe, that they can teach it; and we state, as our only remaining objection, our full conviction that it receives no support whatever from them. It is not alleged by its friends, that it is anywhere expressly stated in the sacred writings, in the form in which it is received by them. It is admitted by their soundest divines, that nothing is directly said of the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ. It is entirely a matter of inference, that such a union exists. This we consider very unfortunate for the hypothesis. It throws no small degree of suspicion over it. It might have been expected that a doctrine of so extraordinary a character, so opposed to all the common apprehensions of the human mind, and the ordinary belief of the Jews, to whom our Saviour's instructions were originally addressed, so novel, and mysterious, so calculated to astonish and repel honest, and alarm, if you will, prejudiced minds, it might have been expected that such a doctrine, had it formed part of revelation, would have been accompanied with the strongest evidence. The most ample testimony of its truth would have been given. It would have been stated in the most plain and explicit manner; the necessary definitions and illustrations would have been added, and objections met and refuted. One would have supposed that it would be

a topic to which our Lord would perpetually recur, and on which he would fully and unequivocally explain himself, expressing his views in language which would effectually preclude all misconception and uncertainty. Reserve on a subject confessedly so obscure and difficult would be peculiarly misplaced, as it would necessarily produce doubt, perplexity, and error. When we take into view these considerations, and reflect, that not a single passage occurs in the whole New Testament, which contains anything like an inculcation of the doctrine in question, the omission appears very extraordinary. We say more, it seems utterly incapable of being accounted for. The doctrine, if true, is certainly an important one, and of a nature, as we have said, which required that it should be taught with the greatest distinctness. Why then this silence upon the subject, on the part of our Saviour and his apostles? Why is it, that no direct trace, no incidental notice of it, is found in any expressions, which dropped from their lips? Why are we left to gather it from ingenious comparisons and remote processes of reasoning? Why compelled to search the Scriptures in vain for terms adequate to express it, for it is not pretended, that the phrases, *twofold nature*, *God-man*, *divine-human*, and others found so convenient in modern times, or anything resembling them, are met with in our Bibles? These are inquiries to which the friends of the doctrine never have, and never can, furnish a satisfactory reply.

There is another consideration, which has great weight with us. It may be fairly concluded, that those, who were about the person of our Lord, or who were occasionally addressed by him, had no suspicion that he was God, from the circumstance, that they give no evidence

of having felt that astonishment, which the disclosure of such a fact could not have failed to excite in their breasts. Had they regarded him as the supreme God, is it possible, that upon first becoming acquainted with the fact, they would have betrayed no surprise? That he was in appearance a man is not doubted; as such he was presented to their senses. What then must have been their astonishment, upon hearing that he, who stood before them in the human form, was the Author of the universe! Yet nothing of this astonishment appears to have been felt by them. It is indeed more than once said, that those about him were astonished at his mighty works; and the inference they made was, that he was *of* or *from* God;—the idea that he was God himself, seems never to have occurred to their minds. No curiosity was expressed, and no inquiries made, of such a kind as might have been expected, had they entertained any suspicion, that he was perfect God as well as perfect man. The inference is, that they were ignorant of any such union; and this, we think, affords satisfactory evidence that it did not exist. Had it existed, can we believe, for an instant, that they would have received no intimation whatever of it? Would they have been left in ignorance of it to the last? In his moments of confidential intercourse, would their Master have dropped no hint from which they might gather it? Would he have died with this weighty and important secret locked up in his own breast? Would he have persevered in his silence after his resurrection? Would he have finally left the world to go to his Father, and yet have taken no care to inform his attached and grateful followers of a fact esteemed by its friends so precious? Such conduct would be altogether inexplicable. The fair inference

is, that the doctrine was a production of later ages. We lament to add, that by adopting it without any necessity, we assume an hypothesis, which unsupported, as it appears, by the scriptures, and followed by consequences the most appalling, seems to us to disgrace religion, and dishonor the human understanding.

Nor let it be imagined, that anything is lost by abandoning this doctrine. Jesus remains an object of our sincerest, and, under God, our profoundest gratitude and regard. We can have no doubt of his sufficiency for the purpose which he was sent to accomplish; our confidence in him as a deliverer, who is able to save to the utmost, is not diminished; our hopes of pardon through him are not impaired or shaken. God raised him up and employed him to convey the benefits of his mercy to mankind. On that mercy we rest, believing, that through whatever medium our Father may have chosen to impart it, that medium must be effectual, and that mercy shared by us, unless by a fault of ourselves.

On the other hand, by discarding the doctrine of two natures, as stated by trinitarians, we are freed from numerous embarrassments, into which an attempt to explain and defend it unavoidably plunges its advocates. We are exempted from the charge of believing a contradiction or impossibility; the language of the sacred writings ceases to appear strange and mysterious, and all painful uncertainty about its meaning vanishes; we preserve the personal unity of the Saviour, and retain the benefit of his noble example; no seeming shade is thrown over his character, no suspicion of concealment and dishonesty attaches to him; he is presented to our view robed in that heavenly purity, and truth, and ingenuousness, which make him venerable and lovely.

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A

DIALOGUE

ON SOME OF THE CAUSES OF

INFIDELITY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
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A DIALOGUE

ON SOME OF THE CAUSES OF

INFIDELITY.

Mrs. Henderson sat alone at work one evening, when Mr. Henderson entered the parlour, having been taking a walk, as was his custom, to refresh himself after the labours of the day.

'I have been talking with George again,' said he, as he seated himself on the sofa, 'and I am altogether out of patience with him.' Mr. Henderson looked disturbed; and his wife's countenance immediately manifested sympathetic emotions.

'What has the poor boy been doing now?' she inquired in a tone of anxiety.

'I do not feel as if he were entitled to pity,' said Mr. Henderson. 'He is wilful and perverse, and I am more angry than grieved with him.'

'Whatever be his fault, my dear,' replied Mrs. Henderson mildly, 'young as he is, I think he is to be pitied; and the more wilful he is, the more I grieve for him, because I know he is only treasuring up future anguish for himself. What has he been doing?'

'I hope you will not be troubled about it!' said Mr. Henderson. 'I shall be sorry that I said any thing to you concerning the matter.'

'Dearest husband,' replied Mrs. Henderson, in a tone of affectionate expostulation, 'how can I fail to be distressed, when the two beings I love best in the world, are at variance? When my husband and my son have angry feelings between them, how is it possible I should not suffer with both?'

'But I should suppose,' said Mr. Henderson, 'you would know your husband well enough to feel assured, that he also loves his son, as well as you do; and I should think you would have sufficient confidence in his judgment and affection, to believe he would not be angry without cause.'

'I did not intend to express any doubts of the justness of your disapprobation,' replied Mrs. Henderson in a subdued tone; 'if I have done so, the anxiety of my mind must be my excuse for using inappropriate language. I had but one simple feeling of sorrow, that George has given you a new cause for complaint.'

Mr. Henderson made no reply to these explanatory remarks of his wife; and she again inquired, what their son had done to offend his father.

'He has not done any thing wrong, that I know of,' replied Mr. Henderson. 'I do not mean to find fault with his conduct; but you know he has got his head full of deistical nonsense. And he is so wilful and headstrong, he thinks he knows more than any body ever did before; there is no arguing him out of his infidel notions. He will not listen to reason.'

Mrs. Henderson sighed gently, and remained some time silent.

'It is in vain,' at length she said,' to attempt to reason against opinions that have been formed by feeling and association, without any reason to support them. I have long been watching the progress of George's char-

acter with great anxiety. I have seen the tendency to this state of mind from its commencement, and have done what I could under existing circumstances to counteract it. But though we cannot induce him to yield to argument, and though you cannot alarm him by representing to him the dangers of his errors, yet I do indulge a hope, that, after a while, our anxiety will be relieved by a change in his sentiments, and a better state of mind.'

'I do not know what is to bring it about,' said Mr. Henderson.

'Perhaps we may be able,' replied his wife, 'by gentle and judicious means, to induce him to examine the foundation of his own opinions, if he will not listen to ours. We must try to disengage his affections from the notions he has adopted; and after that, he will more easily perceive where the truth lies.'

'It appears a hopeless case to me,' said Mr. Henderson; 'this is the second time I have gone deeply into the subject with him, and pointed out his errors, his folly and his wickedness, as plainly as possible; yet he maintains his opinions as stoutly, and as pertinaciously, as if he had all the reason and truth on his side.'

'It might be better not to contend with him,' said Mrs. H.

'How is it possible to help it, while he is so unpardonably perverse?' asked Mr. H.

'There are some circumstances to palliate his errors,' said Mrs. H., 'and with young people we can hardly be too gentle, too forbearing. It is difficult to keep in mind the ardour of their feelings, and the smallness of their experience, and the consequent defects of their judgment; and yet, unless we do make all these allowances, we are in danger of confirming their false views, instead of giving them clearer and juster ones.'

'I don't know to what circumstances you allude,' replied Mr. H., 'for my part I think he has had uncommon opportunities for acquiring correct notions on religious subjects.'

'He has had uncommon opportunities of imbibing prejudices,' replied Mrs. H.

'He has heard and learned more of all the doctrinal points and sectarian views, than I knew till long after we were married,' said Mr. Henderson. 'And I was more astonished than I can express, to find him entertaining such opinions. I think Tom Paine will have to answer for more mischief than can easily be computed.'

'There are other causes beside deistical writers,' said Mrs. H., 'that have served to lead George's mind astray, and such as have, in my opinion, made more infidels than all the open attacks upon christianity, that have ever been made by professed deists.'

'To what causes do you allude?' asked Mr. Henderson; 'and how was George affected by them?'

'I allude to the circumstances in which he was placed when he first left home to receive an academical education,' replied Mrs. Henderson.

'I do not recollect any thing peculiar in his situation at that time,' said Mr. Henderson.

'Do you not remember, my dear husband,' said Mrs. Henderson, 'that when you resolved to send George to ****, I objected to it?'

'Very well,' replied Mr. Henderson.

'Do you not recollect,' continued his wife, 'that I said, you were going to place your son under the influence of people, whom we both believed had embraced many pernicious errors in their religious creed, and that I was afraid his young and ductile mind would be drawn

into a state of unnatural and injurious excitement, and that lasting evils would follow from it.'

'I remember you were alarmed,' replied Mr. H.; 'I supposed you were afraid of the boy's becoming prematurely religious; and I recollect I told you, there was no danger of his having too much religion: I judged so from the proneness of youth to disregard the subject. I was more afraid he would not have any. I was not then so well acquainted with the false and erroneous doctrines of Calvin, as I am now, and thought a little Calvinism would not hurt him, if he did get it.'

'Error and falsehood are hurtful in every degree,' replied Mrs. Henderson; 'I felt the same fear that you did, that George would not retain the religious feelings we had endeavoured to implant; and it was precisely for that reason, that I objected to his going to ****.'

'But,' inquired Mr. Henderson, 'how could his going there,—where the danger was, as you apprehended, that he would be made to believe in Calvinistic tenets—how could that have any thing to do with his now being a deist.'

'I will tell you, my dear,' replied Mrs. Henderson, 'how it operated to produce that effect; and, for fear of it, I did not wish you to send him there. I have seen this exemplified in many instances, and therefore I apprehended it in George.'

'I really cannot conceive how you can imagine his being in **** had any thing in the world to do with his present state of mind,' said Mr. Henderson, in a tone of incredulity.

'You know, my dear,' said his wife, 'that it has been a principle which has governed me, and which you have approved, that when instructing our little children, religion should be presented to them in the simplest and

plainest manner. We strove to give them the deepest, the highest, and the most expanded ideas of the character of God; and to dwell particularly on his infinite benevolence, as the quality best calculated to inspire confidence and devout affection in their young hearts. The beauty of holiness, and every divine quality manifested by Jesus Christ, were pointed out in a way to captivate them, and fix their strongest feelings on what we deemed the fundamental principles of revelation. But we avoided initiating them into what are called the mysteries of religion, thinking it wisest and best to keep the clouds and darkness, which the human mind has thrown over this beautiful and heavenly system, quite out of their view; believing, that when their hearts were imbued with the pure spirit of the gospel, and their understandings enlightened by its wisdom at a mature period of life, they would be able to grapple with the dogmas they might learn, and resist the falsehood offered as divine truth.' Mrs. Henderson paused, and looked earnestly in her husband's face.

'Well, go on,' said he.

'At an early age, you chose to send George to ****,' continued Mrs. Henderson. 'It was my duty to submit; but I felt afraid he would not escape the influence, which I believed would constantly be exerted to produce a state of feeling considered most desirable. I feared my previous endeavours to instruct him would be frustrated: and it happened as I expected.'

'I recollect something of this;' said Mr. Henderson. 'You were afraid his uncle and aunt, with whom he was to live, would be so earnest to produce an effect upon his mind, that, as he had always loved them, he could not fail to become a Calvinist. On the contrary, I believed that such a gay, lively boy, would not be likely

to notice what they said; and that they would not be able to fasten on his mind any of their wrong notions, even if they tried, which I could not, at that time, be persuaded they would think of attempting.'

'You mistake, my dear,' interrupted Mrs. Henderson; 'I did not think they would make him a Calvinist. I knew he was too young to form any opinion upon the subject. What I feared was, that his feelings would be deeply impressed, and his mind prejudiced by them I feared he would imbibe a disgust to all religion, by being harassed with the inexplicable doctrines they would endeavour to fasten on his memory; the false notions they would infuse of the divine character; and the unnatural restraints to which they would subject him.'

'Well, I did not think much about the matter,' said Mr. Henderson; 'and I confess it appeared to me you were too scrupulous; and, if I recollect rightly, the effect on his mind was not exactly what you had anticipated, nor what I had expected. When he was sick, and we were sent for, he fancied himself converted, did he not?'

'He did: but that was neither the first nor the last change which was produced by the exertions of his uncle and aunt, and the sect to which they belong.'

'I don't remember much about it,' said Mr. Henderson; 'for I looked upon it all as a trifling business, neither do I yet perceive how it has had any bearing on George's present views.'

'Nothing should be deemed trifling that is calculated to have a lasting effect upon the mind, whether that effect be good or bad,' said Mrs. Henderson.

'True,' replied her husband; 'but according to your own account, the effect upon George's mind was not lasting; and therefore, it was not worth regarding.'

'The first effect, my dear,' said Mrs. Henderson earn-

estly, 'was not lasting, nor the second, nor perhaps the third; but the whole was a chain, which naturally led to the state of mind which now distresses us so much. I pray this may not be lasting; but I have fears, though not so great as yours.'

'What were the several states of mind, which you think have led to this?' asked Mr. Henderson. 'I really have not observed them.'

'The first impression that he received, after being placed in your brother's family, was excessive ennui and disgust, in consequence of being debarred so many of his accustomed amusements, and compelled to attend so many, and such long religious exercises, which, as he could not understand them, were naturally very tedious. This state of feeling lasted some time, and was attributed to home-sickness; but I was convinced it had not that origin.'

'I remember,' said Mr. H., 'that I thought from his letters, he suffered from home-sickness; and I believed it best to take no notice of it, thinking it would soon wear off.'

'The second change of his feelings,' continued Mrs. Henderson, in a tone that manifested regret and sorrow, 'was that of fear and horror, on account of the inevitable and dreadful sufferings he was taught to believe he was doomed to endure eternally, unless the irresistible grace of God were vouchsafed to save him. This terror was renewed as often as the least natural reaction of his spirits had allayed it; and at length such a nervous excitement was produced as threw him into a slow fever.'

'Are you sure that was the cause of his sickness?' inquired Mr. Henderson.

'Certainly,' replied his wife; 'nor was it an unparalleled case. During the first attack of this malady, and even

before they were aware of his being diseased, his disordered dreams were interpreted by his uncle and aunt and their pious friends, to be interpositions of Providence to save his soul from perdition, and so they persuaded him. He started from his broken slumbers one night, thinking he heard his name called; he thought he opened his eyes, and saw his chamber full of sparkling stars which were in continual motion;* he was greatly alarmed and cried aloud. His uncle and aunt, who anxiously watched over him, in the hope of a happy change, on hearing his terrified voice, went to his room, and listened to the account. They told him, in so many words, that he was hanging over hell, as by a single hair. They seemed deeply affected, and wept and prayed over him. They said it was an important moment, and would decide his fate. They thought divine grace was operating, and they endeavoured to aid it by all the means they could use to increase his emotions. God was striving with his soul, they said, to save it; and he must wrestle with the Lord, until he conquered, and compelled him to grant the salvation of his soul. The poor child had but a confused notion of what such a wrestling could be; but he believed what they told him. He cried, and groaned, and entreated to know what he could do, and besought them to pray with him, and for him. They did so, and when the violence of his feelings subsided for a moment, they charged him to continue in prayer, and strong supplication to God, that grace might be given him. They told him, if he should hear his name called again, it would be a sign of his having obtained pardon for his sins; and then he might feel sure he was one of the elect

* A fact related, in all its parts, to the writer, by one who fully believed that this was a supernatural course pursued by God, to convert her sister from sin to righteousness.

of God, and eternal glory and happiness would be his portion; his nature would, in that instant, be changed from a state wholly depraved, and incapable of any good, to one pure and holy; and nothing could ever pluck him out of the hands of his blessed Lord and Redeemer; the wrath of God would be appeased, divine justice satisfied, and eternal salvation be obtained.'

'Folly!' exclaimed Mr. Henderson. His wife went on.

'They stimulated him to continued exertion, by adding, that should he not again hear himself called, he must believe he was doomed to eternal wo, without even hope of salvation. They continued to pray and exhort him, till his mind was excited to frenzy; and at length, worn out by these violent emotions, he sunk into a stupor, and they left him.'

Unable to repress her emotions, Mrs. Henderson paused for a few minutes; after which, with a serene, though pensive expression of countenance, she continued her narration.

'It was not long before he was again aroused by a similar affection of the nervous system, a sickly dream, which was very natural in his situation, which indeed is very common in such a state of the body, and should, therefore, be treated altogether as a symptom of disease. I have very often experienced similar impressions, and so have others, without imagining it in any way connected with religion, or observing any mental effect afterwards.'

'Certainly,' said Mr. Henderson, 'How could any one think otherwise?'

'Your brother and sister believed it was the voice of God, and so they told George, and that he might now pour out his heart in hallelujahs and praises to his Maker for his unmerited goodness in saving a lost soul, and

granting such an abundant entrance into his heavenly kingdom. George gladly laid hold of these bright prospects; and the sudden relief, from excessive fear to hope and joy, caused such a reaction of the spirits, that it produced a highly active stage of fever; and he became as raving with delight as he had previously been with horror. By this time, it was discovered by those around him, that he was really diseased, and burning with fever. They became alarmed, and sent for the village physician, who pronounced him dangerously ill. The poor boy was several days on the borders of the grave. When he became convalescent, I wished to take him home, to recover his strength, and the proper tone of mind; but circumstances prevented.'

'What circumstances?' asked Mr. H. 'I cannot conceive how I could consent to leave him there after that.'

'These things appeared less important to you then,' replied Mrs. Henderson, 'than they do now. You felt, and treated the subject of religion, with much greater indifference, and made little discrimination as to the truth or falsehood of the different doctrines professed. You looked upon many of the notions of your brother and sister as so wholly absurd and irrational, that you could not imagine them to be seriously believed; and therefore thought, as George's health was restored, he could be in no danger of being affected by them. You conceived his sickness to be the cause, and not the effect of the state of mind he had been in; and the whole matter made little impression on your mind.'

'It seems very strange to me now that it should have been so,' said Mr. Henderson in a tone of sadness: 'but I must have regarded his health as much as you did; why did I not consent to his return, on that account?'

'How can you forget so entirely your reasoning on

the subject?' asked Mrs. Henderson. 'Do you not remember, that you laughed at me, and apparently with reason, for wishing to carry the child from the pure air of the country, to the hot and sickly atmosphere of the town? Beside, George had been making rapid progress in his studies; and you thought it would have a bad effect to change his school and his routine of pursuits. In short, you had not time to think much about it.'

'What was the effect on George?' asked Mr. Henderson. 'I do not recollect attending to the subject after our return.'

'The effect was such as might naturally be expected,' replied Mrs. H. 'When his strength and natural vivacity were restored, and his mind had recovered its rational and elastic action, he was led to reflect on what had taken place, and review the changes he had passed through. An unconquerable aversion to the subject of religion took possession of his feelings. Its association with his sufferings was strong, and the recollection of every scene he had experienced, extremely painful and disgusting to him. The views of the divine character daily presented to him by his uncle and aunt, and also by his teachers, who neglected no opportunity to instil their peculiar sentiments, were so opposed to those his own reflections suggested when contemplating the beauty and majesty of nature, that they became more and more abhorrent to him. Sometimes, as he has since told me, when his mind had been disturbed and bewildered by the sophistry he had listened to, he would go into a corner, and secretly express the aversion he felt for a being, so powerful and so malignant as he conceived God to be. Then, when he plunged into the woods, and cooled his heated head in the pure brook, and soothed his excited feelings in the sweet and solemn tranquil-

lity of rural scenes, his heart expanded with gratitude and love to the God, who spoke to his soul in the pure language of nature, and declared himself to be as benevolent as he is wise and powerful. Such was the effect of the course pursued with him, that he became impatient to cast off the whole of revealed religion.'

'No wonder,' said Mr. Henderson. 'The effect was perfectly natural, as you observed.'

'The same means were again and again employed,' continued Mrs. H., 'which had at first been so effectual, in the hope of renewing his excitement, but they were tried in vain: and considering him a confirmed reprobate, after all the flatteries and attentions they had lavished on him, his friends at **** began to treat him with scorn and harshness. His uncle turned him out of his house; and did not even pretend that George had offended in any other way, than in not being willing to unite with them in their high religious tone of feeling.'

'Don't tell me any thing more of their conduct,' said Mr. H.

'I suspected something was going wrong,' said Mrs. Henderson, 'and saw somewhat of the changes in his feelings, though he carefully avoided writing openly upon them. I feared his mind had been warped from its early pure and rational religion; and that, having been carried to one extreme of error by the powers of false reasoning, strong excitement of fear and hope, and affectionate treatment from his friends, while they believed him under their influence, it would, by natural reaction and a contrary course of treatment, go as much out of the right line on the opposite side: but I believed time must be allowed to wear off the effects of his late impressions, before any sentiment of delight could be again associ-

ated with serious and holy subjects. Since his return from ****, I have constantly watched for opportunities to restore his early love of God and pleasure in religion; but before his feelings had time to recover from the shock they had received, his mind became more mature, and he resolved to inform himself of the truth or falsehood of revelation and its doctrines, by a course of appropriate reading, and to receive nothing unexamined.'

'He was judicious in making those resolutions, I think,' said Mr. H.

'He was,' replied Mrs. Henderson: 'but not in the manner he carried them into operation; though he adopted the method usual with young people in like circumstances.'

'How was it?' asked her husband.

'He decided, to begin with studying all that had been urged against revelation; intending afterwards to examine the evidences in its favour. But, like too many others whose feelings are enlisted on the side of scepticism, he naturally rested where they led him, and so, after a hasty and superficial reading of the scriptures, he felt satisfied that he had done all that he need, to obtain both sides of the question, and thus thinks himself confirmed in deism.'

'Your account,' said Mr. Henderson, 'is, to be sure, a much more rational one than I thought it possible to give of his present views; and it seems strange to me, that I should have known so little about it.'

'You knew it at the time, my dear,' replied his wife; 'at least I related, and expressed my ideas of the whole transaction: but you would not believe that any effect could be lasting on the mind of such a boy; and thought it would all pass away with his disease. Indeed, he was at the

time too sick, to allow us to say or think much about it; and since then, though I have thought much, I have said very little.'

'I wonder how I could be so inattentive and forgetful of these things: nor do I understand how you learned all the particulars you have related,' said Mr. Henderson.

'When we first went to the child,' replied Mrs. H., 'his mind was deeply exercised and full of the subject; and he could think or talk of nothing else. When alone with him, I strove in vain to soothe his nerves, and prevent those violent paroxysms which he had been taught to believe were highly beneficial. I avoided all inquiries, and endeavoured to introduce a different train of thought: but it was difficult to do this; especially as your brother and sister, were gratified by the success of their efforts, and were full of the subject of his conversion, both in his chamber, and when we were not with the child. Thus by interrupted details and insulated remarks from all parties, from the irrepressible desire each had to relate the progress and completion of the change, as it was called, I at length gathered all I have told you; notwithstanding I discouraged, as much as possible, all communication on the subject; wishing to give a new and different tone to his feelings, and believing it best for him to forget the past scenes, as soon as possible.'

'I certainly,' said Mr. Henderson, 'never heard the circumstances so related before; if I had, I should not have treated my brother and his wife as I did at the time, and have done since.'

'It was the fear of this,' said Mrs. Henderson, 'that prevented me from dwelling on the subject, and stating, as particularly as I have now done, the course of conduct they pursued with George. When I found you

decided to have him remain there, I considered it best to say no more about the affair.'

'I think you were wrong there,' said Mr. Henderson; 'for if I had made a plain statement of the effects of their conduct upon the child, it might have opened their eyes to the folly as well as the wickedness of their treatment; at least, it would have checked them in any further attempts of the kind.'

'Perhaps I was,' replied Mrs. Henderson; 'but it would not, I thought, have any good effect. Your brother and his wife are both sincere in the opinions they profess; their minds are confirmed in the system they have embraced; and their hearts are so wedded to it, that to admit a doubt of its truth, or to allow the possibility of their being in error, appears to them a heinous sin, for which they should humble themselves in deep contrition before God. They are, in this manner, enclosed and hedged in by their prejudices, as effectually, as if they possessed no rational minds. Any attempt on our part to give them different views, would have no other effect than to cause unkind thoughts of us: and, at that time, it would have given them a conviction, that we were as ungrateful for their affectionate treatment of our son as blind to the truths of religion. Unchristian feelings would have been excited between us, and our social intercourse would have been interrupted, if not for ever broken off.'

'I don't know but you are right,' replied Mr. Henderson; 'and, after all, their conduct may not be all that has caused George's infidel notions.'

'Not their conduct alone,' said Mrs. Henderson; 'others joined in the labour, to aid the good work as it was called. One evening, George went by invitation to visit one of the instructers. When there, the gentleman told him, he had invited him, in order that he might get

religion; and he did not intend to part with him, until he had experienced a change. So he exhorted, and argued, and read the denunciations of the scriptures on the impenitent, telling the child, he was the very individual pointed at; he added prayers to threatenings, till, at length, driven to desperation, George declared himself converted, and was allowed to depart. This deception, on the part of George, weighed heavily on his conscience for a very long time, though I am sorry to say, relief did not finally spring from penitence, but from indifference.'

'More's the pity,' said Mr. Henderson.

'George is yet young,' continued his wife, 'and his mind is a candid and penetrating one; it is deeply excited, and full of action. His early impressions and instructions were rational, and I trust he will finally settle down in just views.'

'God grant it may be so,' said Mr. Henderson. 'But I confess I am full of fears.'

'If it were not for my religious trust, I should be full of fears also,' said Mrs. Henderson. 'But I have so earnestly and constantly sought divine aid in training my children, and have made it so much the duty of my life to give them good instruction, that I fully believe our heavenly Father will grant my prayers; and in his own time, and by his own means, produce the state of mind we desire to see in our son. We must, on our part, let patience have its perfect work; for this trial is doubtless for the improvement of our hearts; and we should view it in that light, and manifest a true christian spirit in our conduct to George.'

'You possess at all times more faith, and patience too, than I,' said Mr. Henderson. 'But I approve, and re-

spect, and shall try to emulate your truly evangelical temper, my dear wife.'

'Let us then resolve,' said Mrs. Henderson, 'to guard ourselves against the least appearance of unkindness, in our treatment of the boy. He must be drawn by love and gentleness, and his heart be warmed and opened by generous dealing, and a conviction, that affection dictates our conduct to him. This will give us the fairest chance of overcoming his prejudices, and convincing his understanding.'

'That is the part of wisdom,' said Mr. Henderson. 'But you know it is proverbially easier to preach, than to practice. I am aware of the impetuosity of my feelings. I rarely engage in an interesting discussion, without being excited, and then, to be sure, there is an end of profit or pleasure. I ought not to talk with George on this subject; and I will not, if I can hold to my resolution.'

'I think you are right,' replied Mrs. Henderson. 'On subjects of deep interest, few people can converse calmly and dispassionately; and yet, without such composure, and perfect gentleness of tone and expression, and the utmost candour and impartiality, I am convinced little good is effected by discussion. When unpleasant feelings are excited, the mind will often be unable to perceive the truth of a proposition, be it ever so clear.'

'It may be so,' said Mr. Henderson; 'I have never attended much to these things.'

'You have lived in the world of business, my dear,' said his wife; 'while I, secluded, and moving only in the little circle of my domestic duties, have lived in an internal world of thought, observing and reflecting on the operations of my own mind, and those of the few indi-

viduals, with whom I have daily or occasionally associated. Hence the difference in the character of our minds, which originally, I believe, were constituted very much alike.'

The entrance of company now put an end to the conversation. But it was a subject of deep meditation, and humble petition, that they might be guided by the spirit of wisdom and divine love, in all their endeavours to influence the mind of their beloved son.

Beside the causes which Mrs. Henderson had enumerated to account for their son's deistical opinions, there were others in operation, of which both his parents were ignorant. Or rather, the same causes were operating under different circumstances, for it was still the doctrines called orthodox, which were increasing and confirming George's erroneous opinions. Edward Burrel, a fellow apprentice, and an intimate friend of George Henderson's, had a share in the unhappy influence exerted over his mind. This young man had imbibed some doubts on religious subjects, from various sources; but his notions were crude, and his knowledge of the particulars in dispute trifling, until a young lady, a cousin of his, for whom he had entertained a youthful passion, became deeply affected by a Calvinistic awakening, produced by the labours of an itinerant preacher in a place where she had been visiting. After her conversion, as she termed the state of mind she was in, whenever Edward Burrel visited her, she introduced the subject of religion, and tried to create in his mind feelings similar to those she had experienced from the new kind of preaching she had heard. It happened, unfortunately, either that her cousin required clearer and stronger arguments to convince him, than had been effectual with her; or that those she

adduced, if they originally possessed power, were deprived of it in the process of passing through her mind. Edward Burrel constantly showed himself the better disputant. Yet, though never vanquished, he failed on his part of convincing his fair cousin of her antiquated and superstitious errors, as he called her opinions. This being the case, he resolved to arm himself more thoroughly for the combat; and with that view, read all the deistical and infidel works he could obtain. Thus strengthened in his belief, that no divine revelation had been made to mankind, and confirmed in the opinion, that all things owe their origin to chance, and that annihilation ensues on the dissolution of the body; he renewed the controversy, and had greatly the advantage over his loquacious antagonist.

It sometimes happened when visiting his cousin, that he met a clergyman, who, having learned the change in the lady's sentiments, and seen her at his church, valued such an acquisition too highly to risk losing it by neglect. He therefore called upon her, as frequently as he could ascertain that her father was absent; for he was aware that his visits would not be approved by him, and that the rules of etiquette did not justify his visiting, uninvited, at his house. Whenever he had opportunity, he did not fail to use it, to confirm her faith in the views which she had embraced, and to give her more and deeper prejudices against those who differed from her in opinion. He reminded her that Jesus Christ had declared that he came to "set a man at variance with his own family, and the daughter against her mother," and that "a man's foes should be those of his own household;" and this he assured her would always be the case, when any member of a family was awakened to the truth as it is in Jesus, and became converted; and

should such prove to be her fate, she must rejoice to be accounted worthy of suffering persecution for the sake of her Saviour. He supplied her from time to time with arguments to maintain her warfare with her infidel cousin: and occasionally, when these two champions met, they had a skirmish on the debatable ground. The young lady profited greatly by these conversations, and was thereby enabled to hold on the controversy, beyond all Edward Burrel's expectations. He often invited his friend George Henderson to visit his cousin with him; and was not a little proud to have such a witness to the victories, which he obtained in their polemical discussions. His opponent, as usual, became more dogmatical and pertinacious, the oftener she was convicted of an absurdity, and rendered unable to extricate herself. And she might at length have been discouraged, and disgusted with the unequal contest, had it not been that she sometimes wandered from the defence of the creeds, doctrines, and speculations of men, and stood on scriptural ground; and then the fundamental truths of the christian religion supplied her, from time to time, with unanswerable arguments. The strength these truths afforded her, preserved her confidence in the whole system which she advocated; and left her without a doubt as to the soundness of all her opinions.

It was, on the other hand, the circumstance of her attempting to defend the palpable absurdities of the tenets she had embraced, that served to confirm Edward in the belief, that her whole system was without foundation. Thus each assisted to chain the other's mind in false notions.

George Henderson had been furnished, in his early education by his mother, with such sound arguments to

prove the existence of Deity, and that infinite wisdom and goodness are the attributes of God, that Edward Burrel's atheistical opinions could make no impression on his mind. He had been led from his earliest recollections to perceive and adore the wonderful manifestations of God's love to man, his wisdom and power, in the glorious works of creation and providence; and nothing could efface the deep impression. But the young lady advocated doctrines so evidently absurd, and constantly proved to be so by Edward Burrel, that the result of these conversations, in respect to him, was in unison with his prejudices, and tended to strengthen his disbelief of revelation. His reading confirmed him in these views. 'Edward Burrel,' he thought, 'does not believe enough; there is incontestable proof of a First Great Cause, possessing all possible perfections. Louisa Seymour believes too much; it is absolutely impossible that an infinite can be contained in a finite being; that God, immeasurable, unbounded, eternal, omnipresent, as well as omnipotent and omniscient, could be born in the circumscribed form of man, and be confined to pass a temporal life on earth, and then die. God die! It is a contradiction, not only in language, but in ideas;—it may as rationally be said, that a part is greater than a whole; that time comprehends eternity; that truth is contained in falsehood; and goodness in sin. God remains for ever in his own infinite existence; diffusing, by established laws, his overflowing bounty on his dependant creatures, whom he will ever protect, overrule, and govern, according to his infinite wisdom.'

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EXCUSES

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CONSIDERED.

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EXCUSES CONSIDERED.

The subject of the Communion is one in which it has been thought that Christians, especially the younger classes of them, should feel a deeper interest. I would not lay too great stress on the external ordinances of our religion; but certainly they should receive from us a proper regard; and this, it is to be feared, too many are slow to pay them. I am sometimes apprehensive, that the tendency of the age is to place the positive institutions of religion too low in the scale of christian duty. We talk much, and justly, of the supremacy of the moral virtues; but I am apt to think that, in our admiration and praise of these, we are in danger of undervaluing too much those inferior, indeed, but important duties, which consist in certain ordinances, kindly appointed by the Saviour as the means of spiritual attainments. Very true it is, there is no merit in simply coming to the christian communion. Nor is there any merit in the mere performance of any religious service. But this does not prove that no good springs from it, nor that, by wilful neglect of it, we do not forfeit the approbation of our Lord. "Ye are my friends," said he, "if ye do whatsoever I command you." Now what command of his is more positive and unequivocal than—"Do this in remembrance of me." How is it, that any can excuse themselves in disobeying this injunc-

tion? The authority of him who imposed it will not, certainly, be called in question. All believe, I presume, that what Christ commanded, was virtually the command of God. Nothing, therefore, which he has ordained for his followers, can be deemed optional or useless. This, doubtless, all are ready to admit. How, then, do Christians excuse themselves in neglecting the communion service? The answers that have been given to this inquiry are various. Upon some of them I am now to remark; and in doing it, must claim your indulgence for that plainness of speech, which, in the discussion of such topics, is both necessary and useful, and for that directness of address, by which I hope to secure the personal interest of my reader.

I begin with what may be considered a plausible excuse with some—a sort of lurking skepticism. You refrain from the communion because you are not certain it was intended by the Saviour to be perpetual in the church. Now in reply to this let me say first—suppose the case stronger than yours. Suppose you not only *doubted*, but *knew* that the command in question was not designed to extend to our times as obligatory upon Christians. Would it, therefore, be best to abandon the communion table? Is it wise to refrain from everything for which we have not a positive injunction? There certainly can be no harm arising from this service. We think it is productive of much good. Why, then, abandon it? Because you think you were not commanded to attend upon it? But you do not act upon this principle in other concerns. You do many good things for which there is in the scriptures no express direction. Take an instance. You do not wait for a command to celebrate the anniversaries of important political events. You go voluntarily,

and joyfully, to these festivals,—and why? Because interesting recollections crowd on you there, and your patriotism is kindled into a brighter flame, and you are made a better and a happier citizen. And can you tell me why you should wait, at all the more, for a command to celebrate the feast commemorative of the Saviour of the world? For myself, command or no command, I would celebrate it—for it puts me in mind of my greatest benefactor, my piety and my benevolence are inspirited with new life, and I am made a better and happier Christian.

Your case, however, is by no means such as I have been supposing. You do not pretend to *know* that Jesus did not design the Lord's supper to be obligatory on Christians of the present time. You only say you have doubts about it. Now, as you are certain no evil can come of the service, and probably some good will result from it, does not wisdom urge you to join the communion? In this, you cannot but perceive, is your greatest safety, even on the ground of your doubts as to its positive obligation. You may, some time, be convinced of its obligatory nature, and then the thought that you had neglected it will give you pain.

But, may I not ask, in the next place, why it is that you have any such doubts on the subject? That Jesus enjoined the observance of the communion on his *first* disciples, you admit. What reason have you for suspecting that it was intended to be confined to them? Can you cite a single passage from the New Testament which intimates such a design? You cannot. If, then, the scriptures place no limitation on the Saviour's command, why will you? Is there anything in the *nature* of the ordinance that should lead you to suppose it was to be temporary in the church? No. It is simple, significant,

applicable to Christians in every age and clime, and useful to all who use it well. Consider, too, the *reason* our Saviour gave at the time he appointed it. "Drink ye all of it, *for* this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for *many*"—shed, certainly, not for his immediate disciples alone, but also for the multitudes that were to succeed them. This reason, you perceive, addresses itself to us with as much force as it did to the twelve. What, again, was the *design* of the communion? Remembrance of Christ. "Do this in remembrance of me." And have we less occasion to remember our Saviour than the first Christians had? Have we less need to use the means of calling what he said, and did, and suffered, to our recollection? Besides, did not our Saviour, after his resurrection, say to his disciples, "Go and teach all nations to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you?" But, had he not commanded them to commemorate him in the communion? Now, as he made no exception as to this ordinance, in his last directions to his disciples, must they not have felt themselves bound to inculcate this, amongst other christian duties, upon their converts? I see not how it could have been otherwise. Was it otherwise in fact? Let us advert to the known opinions and practices of the apostles, respecting the Lord's supper. They could not, especially after Pentecost, have been ignorant of the real intention of their Master concerning it. Read the Acts of the Apostles, and you will find it often alluded to. Is there a word in that history implying that it was to be temporary? Not one. On the contrary, it is spoken of as an ordinance of the church, during the period, of which that book professes to give an account; or at least, for the space of nearly thirty years after our Saviour's ascension.

Nor is this all. The question, it seems to me, is settled by the testimony of Paul. He received, as he tells us, his knowledge of Christianity, by special revelation from Jesus Christ. And among the communications made to him from this source, he mentions the account of the Lord's supper. Accordingly, we find him enjoining the proper observance of this rite upon the Corinthians, in his epistle to them. Mark the date of this. It was more than a quarter of a century after the institution of the ordinance. And here is the point to be dwelt upon. If Christ did not intend the rite should continue in the church, why did he, at so late a period, reveal it to Paul? And why did Paul, if he did not suppose it was to be a permanent ordinance, recommend it to the Corinthians, with minute directions as to its proper observance, more than twentyfive years after our Saviour's death; and that, too, without giving a single hint from which anything could be inferred, but that it was to be a standing rite in the church in succeeding generations? It seems to me the conclusion is irresistible.

If any further confirmation is desired, we have the testimony of Justin Martyr, who flourished about forty years after the last of the apostles left the world, that is, about one hundred and ten years after Christ. From him we learn that the Lord's supper still continued to be an ordinance of the church. His words are these: "On the day that is called Sunday, there is an assembly of all who live in the cities, or in the country; and the Acts of the Apostles, and the writings of the Prophets are read, according as the time will permit. The president discourses, instructing the people, and exhorting them to good actions. Then we stand up to pray, and after prayer, bread and wine, with water, are brought, and the president offers

prayers and thanksgiving as he is able, and the people join in saying, amen. Then there is a distribution and a partaking of the things for which thanks were given." Here, you see, the celebration of the Lord's supper is declared, by an unexceptionable witness, to be the regular practice of all Christians in the age next succeeding that of the apostles. Ecclesiastical history is full of proof that, from Justin Martyr's time to the present, the communion has been regarded as a permanent ordinance of the christian religion.

Thus I have glanced at some of the topics of argument by which it is proved that the Lord's supper was designed for his disciples of all times. And now, with the solicitude which it is natural for every follower of Jesus to feel, and with the plainness which one christian brother may always use to another, I ask you, why it is that, in our religious assemblies, comparatively so few participate in the elements of that feast, which was intended to commemorate their greatest benefactor? What further excuses have you to offer for the neglect of the communion? State them, and they shall have a candid hearing.

Will you tell me that this service is fenced round with creeds of man's making, so that you cannot conscientiously come to it? In *our* churches no one can say that such is the fact. We have no creed but the Bible. But are there not promises to be made, you ask, perhaps, which will be as shackles upon our minds in our future inquiries? That there are not such in some churches of a different faith from ours, I do not take it upon myself to affirm. But as to our own, I answer, there are no such promises required. A man enjoys as much freedom of thought in the church, as out of it. Every member is left to be

guided in all things by the light of his own conscience, just as much after having come to the communion as before.

But shall we not, you may inquire, assume, in the sight of God, some new obligations, by joining the church? Suppose I should say yes,—what then? If they are only the obligations which the religion you acknowledge to be divine, makes it your duty to assume, would you decline them? Would you shrink from any responsibleness your Maker designed you should sustain? Would you escape from the burden of a known duty? This were unmanly, not to say unchristian. But I do not so answer the question. On the contrary, I say that the profession of a religion you believe, implies, in the sight of God, no new obligations. As believers in the divine authority of Christianity, you are just as strongly bound to obey its injunctions before you tell the world of your faith, and join the church, as afterward. Neither the words of your profession, nor the act of your communion, and, I may add, not both together, can make any difference as to the number of your obligations. It is true, it would be a natural effect of these words and of this act to make you feel more deeply the obligations you were under before. And this is a reason why you should declare the one and perform the other. For who should not wish to feel as deeply as possible the obligations that are upon him, and from a faithful discharge of which he cannot escape with impunity? But as to a man's taking upon himself any *new* obligations by joining a christian church,—it is a mere fiction. A creature of God, living under the full light of christian truth, assume new obligations! It is impossible. The obligations of every believer of the gospel, are *now* as many, and as strong, as if he had

proclaimed his convictions to the universe, and had commemorated the death of Christ in every church on the globe.

But will not the eyes of the world be turned on us, if we join the church, you may ask, and will not more be expected of us by our fellow men? I answer, suppose this should be the case, and suppose, too, that it should be an evil. It would be, at the most, but incidental to the performance of a duty. And is duty to be neglected for the evil incident to it? But this is not all that may be said to the question. Is it an evil to be so situated as to have the eyes of the community upon us, and to have much expected of us? It seems to me to be an important advantage. It is an additional motive to exertion, and such most of us need. Whose interest is it not to be as virtuous as he can be? And what is more likely to conduce to this end, than the consciousness that the eye of the world is upon him, and that his fellow men expect much from him? What you urge, therefore, as an excuse for neglecting the communion, I should offer as an inducement to the observance of it.

But you fear, perhaps, that should you make a profession of religion, you might dishonor it, by not living up to its principles. And are you certain that you have not made a profession of religion, at least virtually, already? It seems to me that you have, in effect, done so, every time you have joined in public worship. If you concede this, then are you not *now* in as great danger of dishonoring your religion by not living up to its principles, as you would be after coming to the communion? If you do not concede this—if you say that you have, in no sense, professed the religion you believe,—alleging for excuse that you feared you might dishonor it by an unworthy

life,—then, allow me to ask, is it not dishonoring your religion to make no profession of it at all? Is it not disobeying a positive command of the author of it? This excuse strikes me as a strange one. What is it but founding an apology for present disobedience on the fear of disobedience in future? You neglect a known duty today, from the apprehension that you may neglect some imagined duty tomorrow. Your fear, it seems to me, should operate in a manner entirely different from this. It ought to bring you to the ordinance immediately. For thus you would not only be honoring your religion now; but you would be doing something, at the same time, to secure yourself against dishonoring it hereafter, since one act of obedience performed renders another more easy and certain. Besides, if you are sincere in your expression of fear—if you are, in truth, so tremblingly alive to the interests of religion, as to think of neglecting its ordinances, through dread of dishonoring it by your moral delinquencies—then, what is to be said further, but that the very sentiment, which the excuse betrays, is no small indication of your qualifications for the communion. Few persons, it may be presumed, whose solicitude is so awake for the reputation of Christianity, can be unworthy of its privileges, or likely to bring reproach upon its name by an open profession of its truth, and an open participation of its ordinances.

Yet others have disgraced their profession, you say. And what is this to you, except as a source of grief, and a caution against your own misuse of it? That one man abuses a good thing is no reason why others should neglect it. Much less is a known duty to be omitted by us, because our neighbor has performed it badly. True, there are those who have disgraced their profession. But

will you urge this as a reason for your making no profession? Then, you are willing to plead in justification of your neglect in religious matters, what you will not plead in respect to anything else. Have not others abused their riches? But you do not, therefore, refuse to grow rich. Have not others prostituted their knowledge to unhallowed purposes? But you do not, therefore, choose to live in ignorance. Have not others prayed without a spark of true piety? But you do not on that account refrain from prayer. And why will you refrain from the communion because some, it may be, abuse it? Why will you plead in excuse for your neglect of this, what you think not of urging in excuse for anything else?

But you do not think yourselves good enough for the communion. The humility, which this plea often indicates, I respect. It befits us, however, to be on our guard lest our humility be an obstacle to our duty. You say you are not good enough. Do you mean by this that you have no regard to God and Christ—that you love sin better than virtue—that you have no wish to be obedient and holy? Then, indeed, I am of your opinion—you are not good enough for the communion. And I should be of your opinion, also, were you to affirm that you were not good enough to live among men, or to breathe God's air. But you do not mean this. By far the larger portion of those whom I address are, I doubt not, of a very different character. You are believers in Christianity, and it is your desire and aim to obey its injunctions. If so, then you are good enough for the communion. There is no valid reason for your delaying to come to it. Let it be, that you are still imperfect. Who is not so? The service was designed for such. It was intended to be a means of improvement,

which implies imperfection. What are the scriptural qualifications for the service? Perfection? No. But belief in Christ and sincere purposes of obedience. Have you these, then delay not to come to the communion.

Yet so, you tell me, do not all your religious friends counsel you. Do not? Why? What reason do they give for advising you to postpone this compliance with the will of Christ? Is it that your opinions do not accord with theirs? The only question with you should be, whether your opinions agree with the teachings of Jesus and his apostles? It is not to be expected that all Christians should think alike on every subject. Yet that they do not, is no reason why any should be kept from the communion. Is it to be supposed our Saviour did not know that a diversity of views prevailed among his twelve disciples? Nevertheless, he invited them all to his table. But your religious experiences have not been precisely like those of your friends. And do they, on this account, discourage your joining the church? The only question with you, again, should be, do you possess the spirit of your Master? It is no just occasion of alarm and hesitation to you that your feelings have not been the same with others'. It is impossible, in the nature of things, for all persons to have precisely the same experiences—for all are not equally guilty; all have not the same change to undergo; all are not possessed of the same natural temperament; all have not the same knowledge; all are not placed in the same circumstances; nor have all the same means. Now, in view of such diversities, who may presume to pronounce another unworthy of the communion, for not having gone through the full course of his own spiritual exercises? You may be a Christian, and I may be a

Christian, and our neighbor may be a Christian, and yet our experiences may have been exceedingly diverse. In a word, is it your desire and aim to conform your opinions, feelings, and conduct to the standard of the gospel? then, let not the scruples of your friends, as to your fitness for the Lord's Supper, prevent your coming to it.

But it is so holy a service you dare not engage in it. So holy a service! How am I to understand you? Certainly you will not, in this enlightened age, say that any peculiar sanctity is transmitted to the elements of the communion, by their consecration to sacred purposes. A holy service! I grant that it is so, and I thank God for it. But in what sense is it holy? Only as its purpose is holy—that is, to make us devout, virtuous, more like Jesus Christ. In other words, it is holy just as all the other institutions of religion are so—viz. for their holy ends. But you do not refrain from these. Why should you from that? There *cannot* be a more holy service than prayer; yet you engage in this, without those feelings of dread and superstitious awe with which you contemplate the communion. There is no reason whatever for the difference. But suppose, for a moment, that it were more holy than the other services of religion—what should follow? Not, certainly, that you should neglect it the more, but that you should give to it the greater heed. Its superior sanctity consisting, according to the supposition, in the larger power of its sanctifying influences, you ought to be proportionably more solicitous to avail yourselves of its advantages. Thus, you perceive, your plea is turned against you. That the ordinance is a holy service is a very good reason why you should observe it, but a very bad reason why you should neglect it.

And so we might be induced to think, you confess, were it not for some passages in the scriptures that deter us. But what passages, let me ask? I know of none that ought to have this effect. Do you remind me of the fate of him who was found at the wedding feast without a proper garment? But this was not intended to relate to the Lord's supper. Nevertheless, if you suppose it may be so applied, what does it teach you? That you would be safer in staying away from the communion than in coming to it? Not at all. For they who are represented in the parable as slighting the king's invitation and refusing to be present at the feast, were treated with quite as much severity as the unworthy guest. Do you refer me now to a passage in the first epistle to the Corinthians? It is the only one to your purpose in the sacred volume. We will consider it. Paul says, "Whoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord;"—and again, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." The reference and import of these words have been strangely misapprehended. Correctly interpreted, they neither express nor imply any thing that should keep sincere believers away from the communion. They were designed to have reference to extreme abuses in the Corinthian church—abuses which it is next to impossible should occur now. It was nothing less than gross intemperance that the apostle so sharply rebuked. This it was which he meant by their "eating and drinking unworthily;" and as to the phrase, "not discerning the Lord's body," the import of it is—making no proper difference between a commemorative

christian ordinance and a licentious heathen feast. In thus turning the simple and significant service of the communion into a scene of intemperance and riot, they were "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord"—guilty, that is, of treating the memorials of him, or as we might say, his memory, with gross disrespect. And what, according to Paul, was the penalty annexed to this abuse of the ordinance? "Damnation," as it is rendered in the common translation; which, however, Doddridge "thinks the most unhappy mistake in all our version of the Bible." And so perhaps it is. The original word does not here mean what "damnation" commonly signifies with us, any more than it does in James iii. 1, where it is translated "condemnation." But it means *temporal punishment*, such as weakness, sickness, and death, as is evident from the next verse. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you." And this, as the apostle says, was by way of salutary chastisement, in order that, being reformed by it, they "might not be condemned with the world." Such is the true explanation of the passage in question. It was intended to be local and particular in its application. It was a severe rebuke of a profanation that has never occurred among us, and probably never will. You see, therefore, how little reason there is for any sincere believer in Christianity of the present day to be prevented from coming to the communion, as though it were a rite, which it would be hazardous to approach. Even the Corinthians themselves were not advised by Paul to refrain from it, but to engage in it with better views and dispositions.

Yet it is a service that requires befitting preparation of mind, and this, you say, you have not leisure to

make. Just as well may the child say he has not leisure for gratitude and love towards his parents. What preparation do you think necessary for this service, which is not equally so for the worship of the sanctuary, for your daily devotions, nay, for every event and duty of your lives? True, preparation is requisite for a proper observance of the ordinance in question. But it is only the preparation which every one ought, and which every good man aims, to carry with him into all his avocations. He who is prepared to perform his social duties and to transact his ordinary business in a christian manner, is also prepared to join the communion in a christian manner. To say that you are not prepared for the Lord's supper, is as much as to say you are prepared for no duty. Live as a Christian should live during the six days of the week, and you will have all the preparation that is required for the worthy participation of the Lord's supper on the seventh. He who deserves the christian name is always prepared for the communion, whatever be his social engagements, or the pressure of his business.

Still you hesitate. The thought lurks among your other thoughts, that joining in the communion implies, and requires, something like an ascetic rigor of manners and life. It seems to you, perhaps, that should you come to this ordinance, you would feel yourselves obliged to forego the pleasure of certain amusements and pursuits, which you have been accustomed to value. And so you would, I should hope, if your pursuits and amusements are criminal. And if they are criminal, why do you not now feel yourselves obliged to forego them? Are not such pursuits and amusements forbidden by

God? and do not his commands reach you just as much in your present situation, as they would, were you connected with the church? But you think your amusements and pursuits innocent and useful. If it be so, then what is there in the communion to prevent you from continuing them? There is nothing in the Lord's supper, nor in any part of Christianity, that forbids what is innocent and useful, by whatever name it is called. Either your occupations and pleasures are innocent, or they are not. If they are innocent, pursue them, and let them be no obstacle to your coming to the table of the Saviour. If they are not innocent, then for God's sake, for your soul's sake, give them up. Think not that they are the less criminal, or the less fatal, because you are not members of the church. In the eye of God, whatever men may fancy, the faults of such as refrain from the communion are fraught with as much guilt, as the faults of those who engage in it.

But our associates will ridicule us if we go to the communion, you say. And has it come to this? Will you confess to me that the fear of a little ridicule shall keep you from an acknowledged duty? Shall the words of a few companions, frail and erring as you know them to be, have more power over you than the words of Jesus Christ? Shall the dread of reproach from human lips be stronger within you than the dread of God's displeasure? Will you sacrifice your spiritual improvement and satisfaction to the love of popularity, which, after all, you may not gain, take what course you may? Will you so degrade yourselves as to subject conscience to the every varying whims of those around you? I cannot believe it. You are not so wanting in moral courage.

You would be ashamed of so miserable a cowardice. No. If you have the heart of a man within you, you would rise above such taunts. Your associates will ridicule you, if you should go to the communion! Then, let me say farther, this very circumstance proves that you have made a very poor choice of associates. They are unworthy of your regard. Ridicule you for doing your duty as a religious being—as a creature of God—as an heir of immortality! You should blush to have any intimacy with such companions. You cannot withdraw from their fellowship too soon. It is a disgrace to be connected with them, even if you have no desire to join the church.

But are we not too young, you are ready to ask, for the duty under consideration? Too young? Whence have you derived this thought? The scriptures are full of exhortations to early religious culture. And as to the Lord's supper, that valuable means of this culture, there are few historical facts better established than that young persons, nay, children themselves, were admitted to it in the first ages of the christian church. Besides, what is there in the ordinance, that is not at least as well suited to the young as to the old? It is not a mysterious rite, which the youthful mind is unable to understand. Even the child can be made to comprehend its nature and design. Nor is it, rightly viewed, a gloomy service. On the contrary, it is a cheerful one, and perfectly accordant with the joyous feelings, and animated hopes of the juvenile age. Were it calculated to throw the chills and gloom of winter over the spring-time of your life, there would, I confess, be some reason for your avoiding it. But, believe me, it never has this effect, but by its abuse.

It was designed to add warmth to your good feelings, and brightness to your prospects. And then, too, how beautiful is the spectacle, when the youthful circle gathers round the table of the christian communion. Even the irreligious are forced to confess there is something peculiarly delightful in such a sight. Yes, if there be among the works of God, any single object more interesting than all the rest, it is one in the bloom of existence—in the full glow of health—when everything is gay and alluring in the surrounding scenes—when the heart is warm, and the spirits buoyant, and hopes sanguine, —seeking thus early to walk in all the commandments of the Lord, blameless. If there is anything over which the angels of God shed tears of joy, it is this. Nor only so. At what period of life, let me ask, will you be so well able to secure the benefits of the communion as in youth, when your minds are susceptible, and your hearts are tender, and your affections and thoughts are fresh and eager to attach themselves to whatever is fair and amiable? Believe me, the time will never arrive when this service can be made so useful to you as it can now. Everything pertaining to it is peculiarly suited to interest and improve the affections of the young. The longer it is neglected, the less is the benefit to be derived from it. The old cannot so easily enter into its spirit, for their sensibilities are blunted, and much of the early force of their faculties is gone. Delay the duty till then, and you will have, besides, many regrets for time lost, and for opportunities of pleasure and improvement neglected. Delay the duty till then, and the piety and virtue that shall come from it, may also partake of the gloom and melancholy of the season, in which they are produced.

Delay the duty, did I say? I beseech you, think of the hazard at which you make this arrangement. Is life so certain, that you may dare to postpone, year after year, what ought to be done now, when the images are before your mind of one after another of your acquaintance cut off in youth? Go, stand by the graves of those who began the last year with hopes as sanguine as yours are now, and repeat *there*, if you can, the resolution to defer a known duty till old age.

The excuses for the neglect of the communion, you have thus seen to be groundless. Can you continue to urge them? I appeal, in conclusion, to your better thoughts and feelings.

I appeal to your sense of fitness and propriety. I would know if there be anything more proper and fit, in itself, than such a remembrance of Christ, as the communion contemplates? or anything better suited to cherish this remembrance of him than eating and drinking together according to his direction? To the first question there is a ready answer in the affirmative, in every good mind; and as to the second, tell me, if upon a little reflection, you must not confess that some such service as the Lord's supper, is the very thing you yourselves would have thought of, as most suitable for the end it proposes, had you been desired to point out a method of remembering your greatest benefactor?

I appeal to your regard for consistency. You gather yourselves together in honor of other benefactors. You love to keep up a grateful memorial of what they were and did. And shall he, whom you are invited to commemorate, as Christians, and to whom you are immea-

surably more indebted than to any other created being; shall he, of all whom you pronounce great and good, be the only one, you so studiously avoid meeting together to celebrate? It seems to me that a proper regard to consistency should prompt to something different from this.

I appeal to your sense of obedience. Can you feel that you have performed your whole duty, as a disciple of Jesus, while the communion is neglected? Is not one injunction of our Lord as binding as another? It is true, that when ritual institutions interfere with the moral duties, the former must yield to the latter. But when they do not, there is no difference between them in point of obligation.

I appeal to your views of utility. You are not called upon to obey an injunction, the reasons and motives of which you cannot discern. The communion service is a useful one. Our Saviour thought it so, else he would never have enjoined it upon the first disciples. Can it be deemed less useful to us than it was to them? On the contrary, may it not be considered more so? The further removed Christians are, in point of time, from the Author and Finisher of their faith, the greater, one would suppose, must be their need of some such regularly recurring memorial of him. At any rate, the ordinance is salutary in its effects. He who attends upon it, with good purpose of heart, cannot but be in the way of growing better and happier. It is a peculiarly affecting service. We have no other in which the soul derives so important an influence through the medium of the senses. For one solemn moment the world is shut out, and everything invites to useful meditation. Our

thoughts recur to him who spake and died as never uninspired man spake and died. The best feelings are awakened within us. We form resolutions of new obedience. We return to our homes stronger for virtue and happier than we were. Why will any voluntarily deprive themselves of such a source of improvement and satisfaction?

I appeal to your sentiments of love and gratitude. Who, that has but the common feelings of human nature, is willing to forget the requests of a dying friend? What then may we not expect of the christian of more refined sensibilities?. what, especially, in regard to such a friend as Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world? Whose last words should be remembered like his? Whose dying requests ought to be so scrupulously obeyed? What indifference, what ingratitude, to say no more of it, is it not to neglect the simple observance, which he, for our benefit, recommended, almost with his very last breath! Call to mind the circumstances of his closing life, and observe how thoughtful he was of his followers, even in the immediate view of a most painful death. I need not recount them to you. They are already present to your thoughts. Were ever circumstances more affecting? Yet, in the midst of them, he collected his disciples, and appointed what he would have us do in remembrance of him. Sacred are the requests of the departing soul. This interesting rite—what is it but the injunction of our dying Saviour? And have we the heart to neglect it? Then we are willing to prove ourselves wanting in that affection and gratitude for him, which we should deem it wrong not to manifest in respect to far inferior benefactors.

But I forbear. My limits would not allow me, even could I think it necessary, to say all that might be said to induce you to perform this christian duty. I therefore leave the subject to your own meditations, with the single question—whether, as the cold hand of death presses upon you, you will not think that it had been good for you to have early commemorated the dying love of your Saviour in the method of his appointment?—whether, as you then cast a retrospective look upon the past, you will not find it the occasion of many bitter regrets, that, on the ground of such poor excuses, you lived so long disobedient to the sacred injunction, "do this in remembrance of me?"

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A

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN A CHRISTIAN

AND A DEIST.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
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A DIALOGUE

BETWEEN A CHRISTIAN

AND A DEIST.

Mr and Mrs Henderson had ascertained that their eldest son had imbibed deistical opinions; and they were much distressed by this conviction. They had endeavored to search out the causes which had led to this deplored result; and agreed, that however it had been incurred, there was but one line of conduct to pursue with him. They considered it their imperative duty, in their own example to manifest to him the beauty of holiness and the hope and joy of believing; and only in the spirit of christian love, candor, meekness, and forbearance, to use any efforts to draw the soul of their son from the polluted waters in which they feared it was sinking. Knowing the weakness of human resolution, and the liability of all, to have judgment clouded by feeling, they trusted not in their own strength, but sought divine light to guide them.

Affairs continued in this situation, when on a fine day in June Mrs Henderson asked her son George if he could be spared from the store to take a ride with her to Nahant. She was in a feeble state of health, and George manifested his usual alacrity in obtaining permission to devote

the day to his mother. The weather was fine, and the season luxuriant. Mrs Henderson was a true lover of nature; to speak more properly, she delighted in the contemplation of God's works. To her the ride promised pleasure in this way, if in no other. George also found great pleasure in viewing beautiful scenery, and there was to him a bewitching excitement, in the strongly marked features of this little wild and naked peninsula.

George had never in his mother's presence expressed decidedly deistical opinions. With his father he had twice held a long argument, and the result may be gathered from a former part of this narrative. He had no doubt of his mother's having been informed of all he had said; and he had some reluctance to discussing these subjects with her. Yet he thought it would be mean to disguise his sentiments, and would discover a want of independence to shrink from expressing them freely. Mrs Henderson had previously considered and marked out in her own mind the course she thought best to pursue with her son. If opportunity should favor her wish to produce the desirable change, and she could place his error in its true colors before his mind, so as to give him a clear perception of the part he was taking, she resolved to embrace it; but if she saw no such opening, she would content herself with trying to increase his confidence and affection in her and in his father.

George loved and respected both his parents; and though he had dared to provoke his father's anger, by obstinately maintaining his opinions, he had suffered secret sorrow for his offence, and was glad to find a mediator in his mother, and to assure her of his filial

affection and high sense of obligation to his father. Discovering his feelings here to be such as she wished, after such remarks as she thought would strengthen them, she left conscience to do its own work, and said not a word on the cause of his father's displeasure. George thus became reassured, and cheerful spirits and innocent gayety rendered the first hour after leaving the city a short and pleasant one to both parties.

But when the mind is deeply impressed, whatever may be the tone of its feelings, and however it may resolve to suppress them, it will so color and give character to conversation, as soon to display its state, and reveal the causes which produced it. Thus it was with George and his mother.

"There is something very grand and even sublime in this perpendicular pile of rocks, overhung as it is, with vegetation; it is beautiful also," said Mrs Henderson, as they were riding by the romantic scenery near the pretty village of Lynn.

"Yes," replied George, "I always admire these rude and majestic rocks; and the view of the valley too is beautiful, and forms a fine relief."

"The world is full of beauty and grace," said his mother; "and I pity the heart that is insensible to it."

"So do I," replied George. "It is a glorious, magnificent kaleidoscope." George had unwittingly committed himself, in making this comparison;—and his mother instantly caught at the idea implied by it.

"What do you intend to express by that observation?" she asked.

George laughed, and looked a little confused, but said nothing.

"I hope you do not mean to intimate that your aberrations have extended to the degree your words imply;" said his mother. "If you have wandered into the abyss of atheism, your case is more hopeless than I have dreamed of. I pray God, you may not be so far gone in error."

George made no reply.

"You have never before," continued his mother, "indicated, by the slightest expression, a disbelief in a first great Cause; you have always, till now, manifested an entire faith in the existence of God."

"I did not intend to do otherwise now, mother;" replied George. "But that beautiful little invention so admirably illustrates the power of chance, that I was wickedly tempted to make the observation."

"You have probably heard it advanced, by those who fancy themselves atheists, in proof of their doctrine," said his mother.

"I certainly have," replied George; "and I think it a specious argument, to say the least of it."

"It is specious indeed," said his mother; "but it requires little investigation to show its want of soundness."

"Well, I declare it appears to me not so destitute of truth;" replied George. "Those who argue against the power of chance, appeal to our understandings, and ask triumphantly, whether it is possible that a fortuitous disposition of atoms in the universe could ever result in such order and beauty as we see displayed in the natural world; and it does seem impossible that chance should ever dispose them in such forms: yet if they were floating for ages and ages in infinite space, they must constantly be taking some new arrangement, and the possibility of

their being sometimes disposed in perfect order, we must admit; and if we look into a kaleidoscope, we shall be astonished to see how often.—Into this simple tube, a few little, irregular, shapeless things are thrown in confusion, and a person who had never witnessed its wonders, would feel sure that no order or beauty could ever result from shaking them together; yet you know, when lifted to the eye and merely turned round, so as to change the situation of these atoms, as we will call them, and give chance her power over them, we have presented to us, the greatest variety of beautiful forms, disposed in the most perfect order. Now this seems to me to be a very good refutation of that objection to the doctrine."

"Even if it were really as you represent," replied his mother, "I might not be obliged to grant what you assume: for what appears to be chance, may be, and I have no doubt is, according to order established by infinite mind; though human faculties are too circumscribed to compass its extent."

"Well, but,"—interrupted George—

"Wait a moment," continued his mother, anticipating his reply.—"I should like to ask you, if there is nothing in the kaleidoscope beside the few shapeless atoms you speak of. Has not an intelligent mind, deeply versed in philosophical principles, been at work to arrange two mirrors in the tube, and dispose them so as to reflect repeatedly each little, irregular thing, and thus give to the whole the appearance, though not the reality, of order and beauty? All that is admirable in that ingenious little instrument is the effect of intelligence operating by means adapted to produce the result which delights us: and deprived of the power which an intelligent mind

has given it, the little, irregular, shapeless things would appear to be irregular and shapeless for ever."

"Well," said George, laughing,—"though I should be compelled to allow that you have destroyed this argument, because I am not able at this moment to refute you;—yet that would not be to concede the doctrine. Killing one man, does not annihilate an army."

"I know that very well;" replied his mother; "but killing every man in the army, one after another, does as effectually annihilate it, as if it had one great head which was severed by a stroke of the sabre."

"It was the wish of the tyrant Caligula, that the Romans had but one neck, that he might destroy them by one blow," said George. "But I believe it was not a vainer wish than Christians entertain for the destruction of the host of arguments raised against them. The conquest of that army has never been achieved."

"Indeed, it has, my dear;" replied his mother. "But unfortunately these arguments, which compose your army, though often vanquished, are still led out in battle array, and must be fought and conquered again and again, by the champions of truth."

"I had no intention of provoking a contest, mother;" said George, laughing; "I rejoice as much as you can desire, at every victory obtained over an atheistical argument. I have a full belief in the existence of the Deity, and in his gracious attributes."

"I have always thought so;" replied his mother, in a more cheerful tone of voice; "and I am rejoiced to hear you confirm my impression. A hearty conviction of this fundamental truth is a spark of living fire, which will increase till every doubt of divine revelation will be con-

sumed by it. It cannot remain in a good and sensible mind without producing its natural consequences. It will lead you sooner or later to receive the glad tidings of salvation through Jesus Christ."

"On that subject," replied George, "I could meet you with stronger weapons. I do not, however, wish to engage in the controversy; though I have no doubt I could satisfactorily reply to all you could advance."

Pride of opinion and filial affection were now contending in George's bosom. He loved his mother tenderly, and dreaded to give her pain; yet he was strongly attached to the ingenious theory, as he thought it, which he had adopted, and he could not help longing to defend it.

Mrs Henderson answered very meekly. "Far be it from me, my dear son, to enter the lists with you, I have not the power to convince you by the arguments I might use, that you have embraced erroneous notions; nor have I the smallest desire to attempt it."

"I do not know who could, if you could not," said George, a little disappointed.

"If the able theologians who have given their whole lives to these studies, and have written with all the power of first-rate understandings, enlightened by all that can be learned on the subject, if such writers fail to convince you, what arrogance, what folly, it would be in me to imagine that I could offer anything to induce you to change your views!"

"But all these writers you speak of," said George, "were prejudiced persons. They were priests, and contended, as they ought, to defend the cause they had embraced. They would have been fools and cowards to do otherwise. Yet their having fought manfully for their

own side is no evidence that they were on the side of truth. If this were allowed it would prove too much ; for in that case, both sides must be acknowledged to be true ; which is impossible. You will not deny that infidels have been as zealous as bigots."

" But I should like to know," said Mrs Henderson, " what you think induced those men to embrace that cause in the first place. They were not priests before they were Christians."

" They were either weak men, blinded by prejudice and ignorance," replied George, " or they were hypocrites, and maintained tenets which they did not believe, in order to secure power or independence. Ever since the world was created men have striven for power and influence ; and there is no engine they have found so effectual for obtaining and holding it, as that of enslaving the minds of the multitude by religious dogmas."

" It is a melancholy reflection," said Mrs Henderson, in a pensive tone, " that the corruptions of the pure principles of Christianity have been such, as to oblige the honest mind to admit the truth of your last remark. But if you could look farther into the subject, you would perceive that, beyond all those dark clouds, there is a bright and clear sky, where a risen Saviour still appears, offering his gospel to his faithful followers. But you cannot see this," she added with a sigh.

" No," replied George, " I must confess I cannot ; but the other I can see as clear as noon day ; and therefore, I do not think anything a priest can urge has any weight, or ought to have any. If a sensible, intelligent deist should discover arguments strong enough to convince him, and he should meet his former associates in controversy, he might have some claim to be heard."

"But, my dear child," said his mother, "would not your sensible deist, the moment he had become impartial enough to weigh the arguments on both sides candidly, and admit the force of those he had before opposed, would he not at that moment be a Christian, and be classed with your priests and hypocrites."

"No," replied George; "if he had previously been in favor of deism, and opposed to Christianity, and had sincerely labored to support and vindicate his opinions, and no worldly advantage followed the change, I should then think his candor and honesty manifest, and I should be willing to hear what he had to say, and to believe, if his arguments were sound."

"I do not see, then," replied his mother, "but you are bound to examine the scriptures, and weigh their testimony; for certainly you cannot deny that Paul, and Peter, and the other disciples of Jesus Christ, and the early converts, both Jewish and Gentile, were previously, so far as respected his mission, deists, and were zealous to defend their faith; nay, they were highly offended with the doctrines they afterwards embraced; and no worldly advantage, but the contrary, followed their change of opinion. Therefore they established their candor and sincerity by your own test."

"Your argument would be irresistible," said George, "if these histories were true; but unfortunately there is no reality in them. All, which, it is pretended, was written by these good men, is a sheer fabrication. It is all an imposture."

"How many great and good men have believed it!" said Mrs Henderson.

"They were all blinded, mother," said George, with

increasing confidence; "all under the yoke of ecclesiastical domination; the instruments of priestcraft enveloped their minds in the midnight darkness of bigotry and superstition."

"Poor men!" exclaimed Mrs Henderson, "how I pity them. If Dr * * *, and Mr * * *, and Professor * * *, and a host of our own worthies, and a still larger host in Great Britain and on the continent of Europe; for I particularize a few, because you know them personally, and can have no doubt of their talents, integrity, or learning; if this host, I say, of the present and past ages, could only have had"—She suddenly stopped.

"If they could only have had, what?"—asked George.

"I had better suppress what I was going to say;" replied his mother, in a lower and softened tone. "It would only excite your temper, and I should be very sorry to do that."

"Never fear," replied George, laughing.

"Be it upon you then;" said his mother, laughing in her turn. "I was going to say if all these men could only have had the wisdom, the clear perception, the freedom from prejudice—extensive views, sound sense and erudition of George W. Henderson, how much the world would have gained; and how much expense of time, health, and money, might have been saved in their labors!"

George bit his lip—whipped the horse, and looked straight forward. They drove on a few minutes in silence. At length Mrs Henderson said—"Forgive me, my dear boy, I am so heart-sick, and soul-sick of this deistical flummery, this jargon of presumption and folly, that I am hardly able to repress my contempt—not for the persons who are the dupes of this sophistry; for them,

I feel only regret and sorrow—but for the flimsy support they attempt, I can feel no other sentiment than disgust; it has been repeated and repeated till it is stale and offensive beyond bearing."

"Sarcasm is not argument," said George, tartly; while his lip curled, and his eye flashed fire.

"If sarcasm, by throwing a broad light on the subject, makes the truth evident, it operates like a powerful argument," said Mrs Henderson. "By contrasting your inexperience, your ignorance of the whole ground in dispute, inferior powers of judging, and all that distinguishes youths like yourself from such men as the learned, the wise, and the good, who have lived since the Christian era, so full a light is thrown on the circumstance of your standing up alone, to pronounce them in error, and yourself the only correct man, that you must see the truth of my assertion, when I call it presumption and folly."

"You ought not to say that I stand alone," said George. "There have been many as learned and gifted men as Christianity can boast, who have denied the facts on which the faith of Christians rests; and who have ably defended the ground of opposition."

"There have been, I allow," replied his mother, "on that side of the question, some writers who rank high as to intellect and attainments, and, at the time they wrote, they dazzled the world with their talents. But few, if any, of them even pretended to an acquaintance with biblical criticism; and there is a ready solution of their scepticism, in the moral perversion of some, in the strength of early prejudices in others, and in the misfortune of never meeting with rational and candid opponents.

Revelation was presented to their minds enveloped in falsehoods, and they threw it away in disgust, without an impartial examination."

"I should doubt that," said George; "it could only be a fool or a villain, who could treat the subject in that way."

"I am rejoiced to hear you express such an opinion, my son;" said Mrs Henderson, "and I earnestly hope you will prove its sincerity by such a deep and persevering investigation, as shall entirely emancipate your head and heart from error. But I assure you that neither Hume nor Voltaire, the two great champions of deism in their respective countries, by their own confession, ever read the scriptures, much less studied them, as they should such ancient documents, with careful comparison and minds freed from a desire to condemn them. Unfortunately for the young of all ages, the greatest minds are not always accompanied with the purest hearts. That deistical writers were men of genius, is no evidence therefore, that they were pious or virtuous."

"Neither are they proved to be wanting in piety and virtue, because they wrote in defence of deism," said George.

"I think I may convince you that such writers, if men of talents, were thus wanting;" said Mrs Henderson. "But I will leave it for another opportunity; at present your mind is not in a state to perceive the truth of many things which it will, I hope, ere long be willing to receive."

Mrs Henderson would now gladly have dropped the subject, for she feared her son would be weary of it; and she thought it wiser, that truth should come slowly and

surely, than that by pressing it too long or abruptly, she should incur the risk of increasing his disgust for the investigations she wished him to make. But George, as is usual in such cases, was ardent in pursuit. Not that it was truth exactly, which he sought; though he, like most others in a similar predicament, persuaded himself, it was that alone he desired. He loved to argue; and he loved to gain victories. "At any rate," said he, "you will allow that I do not stand alone."

"Why comparatively, George," replied his mother; "for the whole number you could bring on your side would seem inconsiderable, when opposed to the host of believers."

"The argument ought not to rest on the talents, or ingenuity, or numbers of men who advocate it," said George, "but on its own internal strength. Truth is immutable, and must defend itself."

"Truth, they say, lies in a well," said Mrs Henderson, playfully, "and if so, we must have men experienced in diving to bring it up."

"Agreed," replied George; "but when it is brought up, it should be able to manifest itself, and not require advocates or interpreters."

"Let it only be displayed in its native dignity and beauty, and it will need no extrinsic aid," replied his mother; "it will be embraced by every pure heart, every unsophisticated mind. But, unfortunately, too many have clothed truth in garments of their own making; and while each has invested her with a different attire, and contended about her, as if the drapery was a constituent part of herself, the simple beauty and majesty of her form can no longer be discerned. So that many people,

who are ignorant of all this ill treatment, believe that it is only a pile of old fashioned and cast off apparel they are viewing, and will not believe that truth, bright and beautiful, is to be found underneath. All these investments must be stripped off—and every false covering laid aside by those who wish to contemplate divine truth in her native splendor."

"I am sure that is what I wish to do," said George; "and it is for that very reason I have been studying so many books; and investigating the subject of religion, with so much earnestness. There are not many of my age who have thought and read as much as I have to obtain the truth; and I should think that would convince you, that I am neither presumptuous nor foolish. I never had such epithets applied to me before, and I assure you, I did not find it easy to bear the imputation."

Mrs Henderson answered with solemn emphasis, though in a tone of gentle affection. "Until you have looked deeply enough into your own heart to perceive that you, like all others, are disposed to be presumptuous, till you can be sensible that the weakness of your mind amounts even to folly, until you feel yourself to be as nothing, compared to the Deity whom you acknowledge and worship, you can be in no fit state of mind to seek truth sincerely, or embrace it when presented to you."

"I have never imagined anything depended on the state of my own mind, in relation to this subject:" said George. "I cannot conceive why I am not at all times in a proper state of mind to seek truth, and embrace it when presented to me; that is, when I am not too gay and happy to fix my attention upon such subjects."

"This is a subject," my dear son," said Mrs Hender-

son, "on which I wish to talk with you. On the state of your own mind you have not thought much, and as yet know very little about it. Let us leave the whole field of polemic divinity to those who are properly qualified to explore it; neither you nor I are prepared for such a labor. Your knowledge is quite circumscribed; and the little you have is altogether on one side of the subject"—

"You are mistaken there, mother," interrupted George, "I think I know a little of both sides."

"My knowledge also," continued Mrs Henderson, without noticing George's contradiction, "is necessarily extremely limited; and is nearly as much confined to the affirmative side as yours to the negative. We might therefore dispute for years, without either convincing or enlightening the other. But every body can look into his own heart. Every body can reflect upon his own thoughts; and study his own feelings, and in this way we can all come at some truths which it is important we should all possess."

"I confess I know very little upon this subject," replied George, "nor do I understand how it can have any bearing on the points in question."

"It has so much bearing upon them, my dear," said his mother, "that if the heart is not in a right state to receive truth, especially religious truth, the strongest arguments in its favor will be as much thrown away, as water spilled upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up. It was this fact to which Jesus Christ alluded, when he said, 'if ye believe not Moses and the Prophets, neither would ye believe though one rose from the dead,' meaning, if the heart is not in a right state to receive the truths already offered, neither would it be able to receive greater evidences of truth."

"I don't know how I am to find out whether my heart is in a right state or not," said George; and he added laughing,—"I hardly know whether I have got any heart."

"Perhaps it will assist you in making discoveries, if I ask you a few questions respecting your thoughts and feelings," said his mother.

"Very well," replied George, who was at bottom an ingenuous youth, "I am sure I am willing you should ask as many questions as you please; and I will answer as well as I know how."

"Tell me then," said Mrs Henderson, "what are your feelings respecting this question of a revelation from God by his Son Jesus Christ."

"My feelings!" repeated George, "I have no feelings about it, that I know of."

"You said you wished to know the truth, and have been reading a great deal to find it," said Mrs Henderson.

"Well I am sure I do wish to know the truth," replied her son; "and you know I have read till I was tired of reading on the subject."

"Do not our wishes indicate our feelings?" asked his mother.

"Oh I understand you—yes, certainly," answered George; "and I say then, my feelings are, if the Christian system is true, I should be glad to know it."

"And do you really believe that to be the case, George?" asked his mother.

"Certainly," he answered.

"And in that case, you feel ready to embrace it, and acknowledge yourself a disciple of Christ?" said Mrs Henderson.

"Of course, if I find it true," replied George, in a hesitating tone.

"Suppose for the sake of argument," said his mother, "that in conversation with some learned and good man, he should be able to offer you a train of facts, substantiated by evidence that you could not question, and a course of reasoning that would place the truth of the Christian revelation, and the histories of it by the Apostles, beyond further dispute, and render it so clear and convincing to you, that you could no longer withhold your assent, or find an objection to make; would you in that case feel rich in the conviction that you had received a guide for your future faith and conduct, and that the means to attain heavenly happiness were provided in the precepts and doctrines of Jesus Christ? Or would you feel a lurking disappointment, that you had been vanquished in argument, and mentally go over the ground again, anxious to find some new argument which you had neglected to urge, or some flaw in his statement, that would give you again the advantage."

George appeared to be reflecting for some time, and made no reply.

"Do you think you can judge fairly, what would be your feelings in such circumstances?" asked his mother.

"I do not know that I can," he replied. "It is a new thought to me; I never conceived of such a possibility, and therefore never considered what effect it would have on my mind."

"But you can, by a little reflection, imagine yourself in such a situation;" said his mother, "and cannot you imagine how you should feel, and what you should say.

"Of course," said George, "if I entered into a controversy with any one, I should try with all the strength

of my reasoning powers, to maintain my ground. I should be wrong, if I did not."

"But after you had put forth all your strength, and brought forward all your objections to the facts he alleged, and had advanced all your arguments to support your own side, if you were still met with stronger and better sustained evidences in favor of that system,—what then ?" said Mrs Henderson.

"Why then I should acknowledge myself conquered, I suppose," said George.

"Reluctantly ?—or cordially ?" asked his mother.

"Why it is not very pleasant to be put down, and proved to be in the wrong, let us advocate what we will," said George.

"That depends upon the state of our feelings in relation to the subject," said his mother. "If you had picked up a stone in your rambles, and was about throwing it away again, and some one told you it was a gem of great value,—a diamond of the first water, and would make your fortune ; you might not readily believe it ; you might be afraid of being imposed upon ; you might think it very improbable ; or it might appear impossible ; you would state all your doubts, and raise every objection, and bring forward every argument which appeared to you to disprove it ;—but you would not find it very unpleasant to be put down, and proved to be in the wrong."

"Certainly I should not ;" replied George, laughing.

"But you would not have the same feelings, in case it should be proved to you that the christian system is true ?" said Mrs Henderson.

"I cannot say I should," replied her son.

"Can you then deny that your feelings, your heart, is engaged on the side of deism ?" asked Mrs Henderson.

"I cannot acknowledge it;" replied George, hesitatingly. "Why should I feel any predilection for one side more than the other? I have always believed myself entirely impartial, and cannot conceive that I am not."

"You must decide that point yourself, my son;" replied his mother. "If you feel sure that you would not be sorry to be convinced you have been advocating an error, if you would not be glad to maintain your cause, and even to convince those opposed to you; there is no doubt that truth alone is the object of your pursuit, and that when it is fairly presented to you, it will be cordially received. But if, on examining your heart, you do not find that such would be your feelings, it must be evident to you, as it is to me, that you argue for victory, and not for truth, and that you will shut your eyes to whatever opposes your opinions, whenever it is possible."

"Allowing my mind, for the sake of argument, to be in the state you suppose it—what do you think I ought to do?" asked George.

"I should advise you, my dear," replied his mother, "in the first place, to examine the effects on the human character, of the two opposite opinions; and to ascertain as far as you can, which belief, fully acted upon, is most conducive to the happiness of this life. If it should appear to you, after such a deliberate examination, that mankind universally need such a faith in a superintending providence as the gospel discovers to us, to reconcile them to the trials of life; if they require the restraints which a conviction of a future state of rewards and punishments imposes; if they are supported under suffering, by the promises of God; if this system is calculated to improve, elevate, and purify character; if, in short, it greatly increases happiness, and diminishes sorrow, even

in this world, setting aside the internal evidence this fact would afford of its divine origin, should you not think it highly desirable, that mankind, whether the system be true or false, should be induced to give a full and hearty credence to it?"

"Most certainly;" replied George, "if such could be the fact. But it is a fundamental principle in moral philosophy, that falsehood cannot really increase happiness, but on the contrary, must destroy it, first or last. And this is one reason for trying to induce people to give up the delusion which charms them so much."

"That is begging the question," said Mrs Henderson.

"How so?" asked George.

"By taking it for granted that the christian system is a falsehood; which is the point at issue," replied his mother. "You must not assume points in this way; but simply inquire what is the fact, whether a belief in the gospel be desirable or not. Can you not inquire what are the advantages or disadvantages of the christian faith, as it respects our condition in this life?"

"Why certainly that can be done," said George.

"Well my dear," replied his mother, "that is what I wish you to do in the first place, as candidly and impartially as you can. When you have taken time to weigh this question maturely, I think you will perceive that it is desirable that mankind should believe in divine revelation. You will see that such a belief must conduce to their temporal welfare; if so, you will also perceive that no person of kind and benevolent disposition would ever desire to utter a word tending to raise a doubt in the mind of a believer; and you will resolve henceforth to hold your opinion in silence and secrecy, if you continue

to believe that your superior intellect enables you to see farther and deeper and higher than all the christian world, and that you know to be false what they receive as divine truth. When you can feel and resolve thus, and not till then, will your mind be in a fit state to examine on what evidence the christian faith rests."

George made no reply to these remarks, and his mother after a short silence added—"We will dismiss this subject now, for I find there is too much excitement in the prospect, to allow the mind to dwell on anything else."

George did not feel satisfied with the turn the conversation had taken; nor with the situation in which it left him. He was somewhat tired of the subject, which his mother perceived, and on that account had changed it for a lighter one; still he did not like to leave the argument resting in this manner. He was not easy in his new predicament, but he saw no ready way to extricate himself, and therefore acquiesced in his mother's proposal of suspending the conversation. They soon arrived at Nahant, where they found a numerous company, and a new and livelier train of thought took possession of his mind.

When his mother after dinner retired to her chamber to refresh herself by a little sleep, George rambled out alone among the rocks, and indulged his disposition to muse. He tried to comply with his mother's request, and to discover the advantages that would result to him if he could be convinced that the christian religion was founded in truth. But this was a new subject of investigation; he had never thought upon it, and was quite unprepared to look deeply and thoroughly into it. His reasonings and his facts had been altogether in another path. To meet the arguments of those who defend the system,

and to oppose to them, all he had been able to collect, or could himself suggest, had been his aim and his habit; and any other mode of examining the subject, he had not attempted. At one time he resolved, that he would modestly acknowledge to his mother his inability to comply with her wishes, and request her aid in pointing out the benefit, in our temporal state, of a belief in Christianity; but his pride revolted at such an idea, and he at length determined he would take longer time to consider the subject and say nothing more respecting it at present.

In this state of mind, after tea, he brought the chaise to the door and handed his mother into it. She had no intention of alluding again to religion. If she excelled in any talent, it was in watching nicely the state of feeling of those with whom she associated; and in a delicate tact, that enabled her to adapt her treatment to the ever changing and complicated tone of their spirits, and the degree of light, at the moment beaming on their understandings. The conversation during their ride home was various and pleasant. Mrs Henderson manifested her usual affectionate attentions to her son; entertained him with anecdotes of her early days, a theme always delightful to the young; encouraged him by acknowledging and approving his good qualities; listened with complacency to his gay and juvenile remarks, and repressing the disposition, often so strong in maternal bosoms, to reprove and give advice, she strove to render the excursion so pleasing as to leave on his feelings a happy impression.

Jos. Allen

SECOND

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

AMERICAN UNITARIAN

ASSOCIATION.

WITH AN APPENDIX.

BOSTON,

BOWLES AND DEARBORN, 72 WASHINGTON STREET.

GENERAL DEPOSITORY OF THE AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

1827.

BOSTON,
Isaac R. Butts and Co. Printers.

AMERICAN

UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

THE SECOND ANNUAL MEETING

Of the American Unitarian Association was held in Boylston Hall, Washington Street, Boston, on Tuesday evening, May 29th, 1827, Rev. Dr Bancroft presiding. Rev. Dr Thayer of Lancaster offered prayers. The record of the proceedings at the last anniversary was read by the Secretary. The Treasurer read the following Report, which was accepted.

TREASURER'S REPORT.

The Treasurer, at the last anniversary, submitted his first Annual Report, with a certificate of the Auditors, certifying that the accounts to the 31st December, 1825, had been examined, with the vouchers, leaving a balance in his hands of $545,22. At the same time a *pro forma* account was exhibited, (which will be included in the account of the present year) from January 1, to May 29, 1826, with a balance of money on hand, $709,98.

The Treasurer now presents his second Annual Report, embracing the period from January 1, 1826, to May 24, 1827, a year and upwards of four months, with the certificate of the Auditors.

RECEIPTS.

Balance in the Treasury January 1, 1826 - -	545 22
47 Life Subscriptions - $30 each -	1410 00
Annual Subscriptions - - - -	764 00
Donations - - - - - -	383 26
(a) Received for support of a Domestic Missionary in Boston - - - - -	712 00
Received on account of Tracts sold - -	154 97
Total amount of receipts -	$3969 45

EXPENDITURES.

Donation to Society in Harrisburg, Penn. - -	100 00
" Society in Augusta, Georgia - -	100 00
Mr Farr, for preaching at Brooklyn, Conn. while Rev. Mr May was on a journey in the service of the Association - - - -	60 00
(b) 65,500 Tracts including paper, printing, &c. -	1725 17
Amount carried forward - -	$1985 17

(a) Received from Ladies of Brattle Street Society -			100 00
"	"	Federal Street Society -	174 00
"	"	West Boston Society -	85 00
"	"	New South Society -	150 00
"	"	New North Society -	50 00
"	"	Twelfth Congregational Church	65 00
"	"	Chauncy Place Society -	47 00
Received by hands of Rev. Dr. Tuckerman -			41 00
			$712 00

(b) Tract No. 1. The Faith once delivered to the Saints 3 editions - - -	9,500
2. One Hundred Scriptural Arguments, 3 eds.	8,000
3. Sewall's Discourse on Human Depravity, 2 eds. - - -	5,000
4. Omniscience the Attribute of the Father Only, 2 eds. - -	5,000
5. On Religious Phraseology, 2 eds. -	4,000
6. Letter on the Principles of the Missionary Enterprise, 2 eds. - -	4,000
7. The Unitarian's Answer, 2 eds. -	6,000
8. Channing's Discourse on the Evidences of Revealed Religion, 2 eds. -	6,000
9. Causes of the Progress of Liberal Christianity in New-England, 2 eds. -	6,000

Amount brought forward - -		$1985 17
Travelling Expenses of Agents - - -		498 05
Rev. E. Q. Sewall for editing the Christian Register - - - - -	230 00	
Extra copies, new types &c. - -	73 74	
	303 74	
Deduct received from Mr D. Reed, allowance for new subscribers to the Christian Register,	58 73	
		245 01
Printing Circulars, Certificates &c. - - -		50 00
Advertising, Account Books, Collecting Subscriptions, writing for Secretary, Postage &c. -		38 67
Six months Salary of Rev. Dr Tuckerman as Domestic Missionary - - - - -		300 00
Total amount of expenditures - - -		$3116 90

We hereby certify that we have examined the accounts of Lewis Tappan, as Treasurer of the American Unitarian Association to the 24th May 1827, with the necessary vouchers ; that the same are correct ; and the balance in the Treasurer's hands on the said day was eight hundred fifty two dollars and fifty five cents.

(Signed) GEORGE BOND, ROBERT WATERSTON, *Auditors.*

Boston, 24th May, 1827.

RESOURCES OF THE ASSOCIATION.

Cash in the Treasury May 24, 1827 - - -		$852 55
Due from Subscribers in the country for years 1825 and 1826 - - - -	369 00	
Amount carried forward -	$369 00	852 55

10. Remarks on a Popular Error respecting the Lord's Supper, 1 ed. -	4,000
11. Unitarianism Vindicated, 1 ed. -	5,000
First Annual Report of the American Unitarian Association, 1 ed. -	2,000
Dr. Tuckerman's Report, 1 ed. -	1,000
Total - -	65,500

Amount brought forward -	$369 00	852 55
Do. for year 1827 - - - -	832 00	
Due from Subscribers in Boston for years 1825 and 1826 - - - - -	16 00	
Do. for year 1827 - - - -	201,00	
		1418 00
Due from Mr David Reed for Tracts sold by him and due in Cash - -	69 11	
For Tracts in hands of Agents, per agreement, of which is due in cash $68 78 -	206 29	
Additional allowance for new Subscribers to the Christian Register, - -	35 34	
		310 74
From Messrs Bowles & Dearborn for Tracts sold by them, but not yet due -	360 15	
Do. for subscriptions received by them -	47 00	
		407 15
Tracts in hands of General Agents estimated at 3-5ths of retail prices - - - -		366 95
Total amount of Assets of the Association,		$3355 39

The Executive Committee intended keeping the Life Subscriptions as a permanent fund, but as the sums due to the Association were not paid agreeably to expectation, they have been obliged to borrow from this fund to meet the necessary disbursements. The number of Life Subscriptions is 53, at 30 dollars each, amounting to $1590,00. The number of Annual Subscribers is 838, and the amount of their subscriptions is $977,00. As the principal part of these subscriptions is one dollar each, the expense of collecting would be saved, if subscribers would transmit the sums due from them to Messrs Bowles & Dearborn, at the Depository of the Association No. 72, Washington Street, who are authorized on behalf of the Treasurer, to receive and receipt for all Annual Subscriptions, Life Subscriptions and Donations.

All Life Subscriptions and Donations will be acknowledged in the Christian Register, or otherwise, when requested.

All which is submitted by

LEWIS TAPPAN, *Treasurer.*

Boston, 29th May, 1827.

The Secretary read the Report of the Executive Committee, which was accepted.

SECOND ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

The second anniversary of this Association imposes upon those who have the control of its affairs a duty, which they rejoice to perform. They are required to exhibit an account of their operations, and to present such statements, as may show the utility or the defects of the institution. They conceive that they are also expected to call the attention of this meeting, and of Unitarian Christians generally, to those circumstances which do, or may powerfully affect our religious interests. As one of the objects particularly entrusted to them, is the increase of mutual acquaintance among Unitarians, they should possess a greater amount of information respecting the progress of our sentiments than can be obtained by individuals. Their correspondence, extended in various directions, enables them to estimate the degree of favor which these opinions enjoy, and the probability of their rapid diffusion. The present occasion is favorable to an attempt at producing unity of sentiment and energy of action on points of vital importance. The annual meeting

of this society is not designed to create a temporary excitement. The effects of our anniversary should be perceived through the subsequent year. It is the only celebration in which Unitarians throughout the United States feel an interest, or can be represented. If no other good were effected by the existence of this Association, than the annual recurrence of such a meeting, this alone would justify its establishment.

The objects proposed in our constitution have been pursued during the last year, as far as circumstances permitted. The need of information on which reliance could be placed, induced the Committee, as was stated in the last Report, to incur the expense of sending a special agent to the Western States. He was directed to travel through Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois, and to ascertain the real wants and disposition of the people, to collect such facts as might illustrate their religious history and character, to form acquaintance with those persons whom he should find to hold the same principles of belief with himself, and to open the way for future correspondence and operation. This gentleman was employed on his tour during five months, having at his return, " passed through twelve States, visited fifteen Counties in Pennsylvania, twenty-five in Ohio, twelve in Kentucky, twenty-two in Indiana, twelve in Illinois and two in Missouri, and travelled between four and five thousand miles, and one half of this distance on horseback." His journey was highly satisfactory. The intelligence which he transmitted was ample, and the sources whence it was derived, were such as entitle it to reliance. Correspondents have been secured, by whom we shall be informed of opportunities that occur of introducing true

religion into the cities, or among the scattered inhabitants of this part of the republic, which must be indebted to the Atlantic States for the means of religious instruction, or be imperfectly enlightened. A security is provided against an injudicious appropriation of money, to places of which we before had insufficient knowledge, and the perseverance, fidelity and success that marked Mr Thomas' mission entitle him to the gratitude of the Association.

In the course of the last summer the Committee availed themselves of the services of several members of the Theological School at Cambridge, who devoted a part of their vacation to journeys in behalf of the Association. The Counties of Barnstable, Bristol, Plymouth, Essex, Middlesex, Worcester, Hampshire, Hampden and Franklin, in this State, and some towns in New-Hampshire and Maine were visited, and though the time that could be spent in this office, allowed only a rapid survey of the ground, much useful information was gathered, that is now on the files of the Secretary, and some interest awakened in the minds of the people. Mr May, of Brooklyn, in Connecticut, was also employed to visit some towns in that State, and has transmitted intelligence that may assist the future directors. Letters have been received from the middle and southern States, and the Committee have embraced whatever opportunities were offered of learning the spiritual condition of the land.

From these various sources of intelligence—narratives of agents, correspondence, personal interviews and public documents, the Committee have been enabled to prepare a brief sketch of the situation and prospects of Unitarianism in the United States at the present time.

The State of Maine offers much to encourage us. De-

cisive marks have recently appeared of uneasiness under modes of religious instruction which have prevailed, almost to the exclusion of better views of Christianity. The system, to which its friends have unjustly appropriated the name of orthodox, does not hold its former place in the confidence of the people ; and dissatisfied, if not disgusted, both with the doctrines, and with the manner of their inculcation, they are eager to receive a more rational faith. In this state of mind, they are liable to run to an opposite extreme from the faith they have left. The present is an interesting and important period in the religious history of this State. The community are ripe for change, ready to throw off the trammels of spiritual domination and think for themselves. Books and teachers would here produce immediate effects, and the Committee hope that the increase of funds will enable them to employ a missionary in Kennebec county, where particularly one might render service to the cause of truth.

From New-Hampshire also, favorable intelligence has been received—from Portsmouth, Keene, Concord, Dunstable and other towns. Little impression has yet been made by our opinions in Vermont, but the Society at Burlington is in a prosperous state. In Rhode Island, one congregation only, is known as Unitarian. It is large and respectable. Information derived from various sources has shown, that the efforts in Connecticut, to prevent even a desire of acquaintance with Unitarianism, have not been successful. Many intelligent individuals in different sections of the State are favorably disposed to our tenets, and when opportunity allows, may become their open advocates. The distribution of tracts, if they can be introduced into this State, will gradually remove

the prejudices of the people, and prepare them for an attendance on Unitarian preaching.

In Massachusetts, Unitarianism has during the last year made considerable progress, especially in the towns lying along the Connecticut. The churches in that part of the State include men of intelligence and influence. The Unitarian paper, originally established at Greenfield, has been removed to Northampton, and promises efficient aid to liberal christianity. In the interior of the Commonwealth, the principles of religious freedom and simple Christianity not only retain their long established influence, but here, and also in Essex county, they have gained an increase of power. In Boston, and in the neighboring towns, the past winter has been a season of peculiar interest. The attention to religious and moral subjects has been greater than for some previous years. Though strenuous and persevering efforts have been made, to give ascendancy to another system of faith, the members of the Committee, after a careful observation of the aspect of society, avow their honest conviction, that the advocates and professors of Unitarianism in this city are not less numerous, and are, in many respects, more enlightened, decided and active, than at the commencement of the last summer. A society has been gathered under most favorable auspices, in the new church in Purchase Street, and another meetinghouse will soon be erected in the south part of the city. While they rejoice in the stability of sentiment among their friends, they still more rejoice in the increase of vital piety and practical goodness. They think they have beheld evidences of religious improvement. The crowded audiences that have attended the lectures delivered in our

churches on Sunday evenings, have borne testimony to the interest felt in such services. The Sunday School Society, recently established, whose branches are meant to extend into other, and distant places, will provide, or call into action the means of christian instruction, which have hitherto been partially used in this way. In the towns about Boston, great exertion has been made to introduce opinions, hostile to those cherished by us. Your Committee have not the disposition to inquire into the propriety of the measures adopted for this end. They may only speak of the consequences, which have been unhappy, in producing dissension and pain ; but which have also been favorable, in awakening inquiries into the grounds of belief, confirming the faith of many in the elements of the gospel, and enkindling a greater zeal in their support.

The situation of the poor in Boston, seemed to the Committee, to have strong claims on their sympathy, as trustees of funds devoted to religious and benevolent purposes. In a city containing sixty thousand inhabitants, it must be, that many are deprived through circumstances, or their own indifference, of the benefit of religious privileges. The sad condition of these persons, the ignorance and wretchedness of whole families, and especially the neglected wants of children, called for a more effectual assistance, than could be furnished by individuals. It was doubtful whether the Committee would be justified, in appropriating the funds of the Association to such an object, and a subscription was proposed among the ladies who attend the liberal churches in Boston. The necessary sum was soon obtained. With the beneficence which has ever distinguished christian woman,

they offered both money and personal services. By a most happy coincidence of circumstances, Rev. Dr Tuckerman was at that time released from the engagements of a parish and was disposed to enter on this field of usefulness. The success which has attended his labors from their commencement, has surpassed the most sanguine expectations of the friends of this mission. A hall was procured in the North part of the city, in which divine service has been attended on Sunday evenings by a full assembly. The calls on the missionary for counsel and assistance have been more than he could possibly answer, and his devotedness and perseverance have been carried so far as seriously to affect his health. In view of the wants of that class to whom he ministers, he has repeatedly advised the appointment of another laborer in the same sphere of duty, and your Committee have no doubt, that a slight effort would procure the requisite salary. As soon therefore as a suitable person can be found, the means of employing his aid will be solicited. The good effected by this mission has been such as merits our thanks to those who bestowed the means of its establishment, to him who has prosecuted it with untiring zeal, and especially to that Providence, under which this moral engine was brought into operation. The first quarterly Report of the Boston Missionary has been printed, and this and a second report, lately made by him, contain many affecting statements. The relief which he has been enabled to administer to the destitute and friendless, through the kindness of those who have supplied his "poors' purse," has been the means of saving families from intemperance and ruin, and of preparing them for direct religious instruction. The correspondence of Uni-

tarianism to the wants of the poor has been practically and forcibly exhibited.

A second Unitarian Church has been recently dedicated in New-York ; its prospects are good, a pastor only is needed to its prosperity. Events of a remarkable character have occurred within the last year, in the western part of the State of New-York. The church at Trenton has been strengthened by the efforts to overthrow it, and the violent policy of the dominant sect in that region, has made itself obnoxious to all friends of "decency and order." The church at Philadelphia has had considerable accession of strength ; that at Baltimore, has recovered from its embarrassments, and is prepared for a settled ministry : and the society at Washington maintains itself successfully amidst the obstacles to its growth. Liberal Christianity has also made progress in the Southern States, particularly in the Carolinas and Georgia. It has acquired new friends in the interior of Pennsylvania, and during the last winter, a church was dedicated at Harrisburg.* Your Committee have received intelligence from important places in these several States, of a nature to excite gratitude and hope. The length to which their Report is necessarily extended, prevents more particularity of detail.

The Northwestern States of the Union offer animating prospects. The progress of Unitarianism in that part of the country, during the last ten years, has been remarkable. Under the preaching and example of the Christian Connexion, the great truths of the gospel have been in-

* Since the annual meeting, a letter has been received from Rev. Mr Kay, late of Northumberland, (Penn.) from which we learn that he has accepted an invitation to take charge of this new Society.

stilled into the minds of many thousands. Error has been supplanted and irreligion has declined, wherever these faithful disciples of the Master whose name alone they consent to bear, have appeared. In most of their doctrinal opinions they coincide with us. "As to their religious character, I was never," says the agent who has been already mentioned, "among more practical christians in my life." They have expressed both through him and other means of communication, the sympathy which they wish should be reciprocated on our part. From gentlemen of respectability and wealth, resident in the western country, who are not members of the Christian denomination, the Committee have received solicitations for tracts and preachers. Cincinnati and Marietta in Ohio, St. Louis and St. Charles in Missouri, Louisville in Kentucky, and Nashville in Tennessee, particularly afford promise of success to laborers who are willing to consecrate their powers to the cause of righteousness in this portion of our land. In either of these cities and probably in many others, a Unitarian society could be gathered by a zealous teacher.

From the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, we have received expressions of sympathy and the promise of cooperation. Engaged in the same great cause, the cause of liberty and truth, formed at the same period and called to contend with many difficulties of similar character, these two Associations should be united in intimate friendship. The prospects of Unitarianism abroad correspond to the improvement of public opinion upon other subjects. A greater concentration of the resources of our brethren in England; the change which has trans-

ferred the Monthly Repository from the hands of an individual to the care of a Society, who will still receive the aid of that distinguished advocate of truth; the growth of a practical spirit; and the frequency of communication between this country and Great Britain, from which we anticipate improvement to ourselves, we regard as circumstances favorable to the interests of Unitarian Christianity in the land of our forefathers. On the continent of Europe likewise, the simple gospel is preserved in warm and faithful hearts. Geneva has sustained the noble character which it acquired in the early days of the reformation, and the city where Calvin taught with equal zeal separation from the Romish Church and submission to his own authority, has discarded the dogmas, that it might imitate the independence of its great teacher. A reply has been received from Mr. Adam of Calcutta, to a letter addressed him in the name of the Association. While, however, your Committee are desirous to maintain a correspondence with their brethren in all parts of the earth, they have not considered themselves at liberty to enter on the sphere of usefulness undertaken by the Society for promoting Christianity in India. A very partial correspondence with foreign countries has been maintained during the last year. It is hoped that circumstances will enable the Committee of the next year, to perform this service more satisfactorily.

The department of the Society's operations, which has been most diligently prosecuted, is the printing of tracts. Yet, the Committee regret that they have been unable to meet the demands of the public. The past year has strengthened the conviction that the chief obstacle in the way of truth, is precisely that which this Asso-

ciation is intended to remove, the inadequacy of the present means of religious knowledge. The disposition to receive correct views of Christian faith, does not need to be created. The desire for an enlightened, scriptural and generous theology already exists. Multitudes are ready to leave the paths of error, if some hand will offer itself, to lead them into the right way. Prejudice and bigotry are yielding place to a spirit of inquiry. The demand for our tracts has been remarkable, as no extraordinary efforts have been made to diffuse them, and even the ordinary methods of introducing works into circulation have only of late been employed. The engagements of the former agent in this city prevented such an attention on his part, to the business of the General Depository, as was necessary to its full success ; and with the commencement of the present calendar year, the agency was transferred to Messrs Bowles & Dearborn, whose connexions as publishers and booksellers, enable them to extend this branch of our operations wherever it may be proper. The enterprise and attention of the present agents recommend them to patronage, and the Executive Committee are unanimous in expressing their hope, that they will receive the encouragement they merit. Their interest in the publishing department of the Christian Examiner, the Reading Room which they propose to connect with the bookstore and to furnish with religious periodicals, and their correspondence with England, as well as their situation as general agents of this Society, suggest the advantages they possess as Unitarian booksellers. Since the General Agency has been in their hands twenty three new agents have been appointed,

mostly in New-England. Fifty two agencies are now connected with the General Depository, and measures have been taken to establish others, in New-York, Pennsylvania and Ohio. The whole number of tracts printed by the Association is sixty five thousand five hundred. Several of these tracts are large, only one consists of less than sixteen pages. Each of these tracts has passed to a second, and most of them to a third edition. They have taken the rank among Unitarian writings, to which their merits entitle them, and the constant demand for them, from persons in this vicinity and at a distance, will probably render a republication of them all necessary in the course of the next year. While your Committee have perceived such a desire of instruction, they have been pained that what they could do to gratify it was so inadequate. The easy and wide distribution of our tracts, the eagerness with which they are sought, and the probability that they will have readers as long as our Association continues, recommend this mode of publication in preference to any other. Tracts bearing our name, are circulated through the country, and are read by more persons, and in more distant places than such as are offered without this pledge for their character. The friend of Unitarian Christianity can find no more effectual way of inculcating correct principles, yet for want of the assistance they had hoped and expected to receive, the directors are compelled to disappoint themselves and others, and to hear repeated calls for new tracts, which they cannot answer.

The funds of the Association do not warrant a large expenditure. The Treasurer's account has exhibited the

receipts of the year, which, though not equal to the hopes some may have formed from the interest awakened at the last anniversary, have been perhaps, as great as could be reasonably expected. A more generous encouragement might have enabled the Committee to prosecute their objects to the extent which opportunity and inclination recommended. The number of life subscribers is fifty three, the amount of annual subscriptions nearly $1000. Fifteen Auxiliary Associations have been organized, and others are proposed. The Committee repeat the suggestion made in the last report, that auxiliaries are almost indispensable to our success. If we would either have a full treasury, or put our tracts into general circulation, branches of the parent society must be formed. The amount of uncollected subscriptions is $1418—all of which, and treble which might have been received and expended, had these channels of intercourse been opened. Among the expenditures of the past year, will be found an appropriation of $100 to a Unitarian Society in Augusta (Georgia,) who were desirous of erecting a church for the worship of God the Father. The circumstances of the case seemed to justify this donation, though it was for an object which it is deemed less judicious to aid from the funds of this Association than many others.

The hopes entertained of a permanent arrangement, by which the Christian Register should be published under the patronage of this Association, have been disappointed. The protracted sickness of the gentleman, whose services were for a time enjoyed in the editorial department, compelled his friends to resign the expec-

tation of his speedy recovery. They have still to lament his confinement by painful disease. Having entered into an obligation to provide an editor, for at least one year, the Executive Committee continued their oversight of the paper till last January, when they relinquished their contract, and they have since had no other interest in its management than is felt by its other friends. The release of the proprietor and editor from other cares will enable him to give his entire attention to the paper, and it is hoped that the encouragement due to his efforts which has hitherto been inadequately rendered, will not be withheld.—The Christian Examiner has been conducted by the present editor, with an ability that deserves much greater recompense than it has received. The patronage of this work though considerable, is far below its merits. The first Unitarian periodical in this country in pretension and in character, and inferior to no other work of the same nature, it should be liberally supported; and the Committee believe they are discharging their duty, so far as it requires them to suggest means of religious improvement, when they urge its claims on the members of this Association.—Another publication to which they would call the attention of Unitarians, will soon be commenced in Keene, New-Hampshire. The purpose of the editor, is to give in a monthly number, sermons of living Unitarian preachers. The excellence of the design, the reputation of the gentlemen who have promised their assistance, and the character of the editor induce the belief, that this will be an important instrument in diffusing truth.

Though it is not immediately connected with the ope-

rations of the Executive Committee, they cannot deny themselves the privilege of calling the attention of this meeting to another great instrument of good, the Theological School at Cambridge. "They who are acquainted with its concerns, know that they are in a prosperous state, and that the spirit of study, improvement and piety prevails to a most commendable and gratifying extent." And your Committee adopt the sentiment of the directors of the Institution, that "it ought to be a favorite object with our religious community."

On a review of the interests confided to them, the Executive Committee can express a conviction, even stronger than was felt on the last anniversary, that this Association was established at a propitious moment, and that if it be properly conducted and supported, it may render essential service to the cause of good morals, and enlightened piety, of christian truth, charity and love. They are encouraged by the favor already shown to their opinions, and still more by the prospects of their extended influence. They think there is occasion for gratitude and confidence, for diligence and activity. They cheerfully trust their religion to the providence and grace of God, believing, as they believe the divinity of their sentiments, that they need only clear exposition, faithful defence, and practical obedience to insure them ultimate, if not speedy triumph. Let them be recommended by clear minds, warm hearts and holy lives, and they will stand and prevail. The truth as it is in Jesus, will be mighty and overcome all obstacles thrown in its way from honest or corrupt motives, and the hour be rolled on before another generation has covered the

face of the land, when the churches of our Lord shall be filled with worshippers of one God, even the Father, who sent his Son, to be the light and Saviour of mankind.

Soon after the annual meeting of last year, the cause of truth and virtue sustained a painful loss, by the death of Nathaniel A. Haven, Esq. of Portsmouth N. H. who had been elected a Vice President of the Association. Few have rendered themselves more dear to the lovers of excellence, few have, in so short a life, connected themselves so closely with the best interests of society, and of few were such hopes of usefulness cherished. He was removed by that Providence whose ways are wisdom and love, though they are often covered with darkness. He has left us an example of Christian zeal, of benevolent activity, and of humble piety, which we may rejoice that it is our privilege to hold in remembrance.

After the report had been read and accepted, Rev. Mr Gannett of Boston offered the following resolution, which he supported by some remarks on the circumstances favorable to immediate effort, on the inadequacy of the present means of instruction, and on the incitements to exertion which are furnished by the nature and importance of truth, and the example of those who have promoted its diffusion. Before he sat down, he requested Mr Thomas, who had travelled in the Western States under the direction of the Executive Committee, to state the impressions received on his journey. Mr Thomas bore testimony to the wants of the country, the disposition of the people to hear Unitarian preachers, and the

excellence of character, and the friendly feelings which he found among the members of the Christian denomination. He seconded the resolution offered.

Rev. Mr Colman of Salem, expressed his doubts concerning the necessity or utility of increased exertions to educate candidates for the ministry; and was followed by Mr Saltonstall of Salem, and Mr L. Tappan, of Boston, who replied to some points, both of reasoning and fact, in Mr Colman's remarks.—The resolution was then accepted—viz.

Resolved, That the opportunities for the spread of Unitarian truth, which are daily presenting themselves, call for new exertions on the part of its friends, and a great increase of the number of its teachers.

Rev. Mr Ware of Boston introduced the following resolution, with a few remarks on its object. Dr Tuckerman of Boston, by whom it was seconded, spoke of the experience he had had in his mission, especially of the evidence afforded him in many instances, that Unitarian Christianity is adequate to the spiritual wants of the distressed, the sick, and the bereaved in the poorer classes of society—The resolution was accepted—viz.

Resolved, That this Association regard with peculiar interest, the establishment by the Executive Committee, of a domestic mission in the city of Boston, and the encouragement it has received.

The next resolution was offered by Rev. Mr Palfrey of Boston, who addressed the meeting at some length. He spoke of the situation and character of the English Unitarians, and, while he lamented their political disabilities, and the obloquy to which they had been subjected in this

country as well as in Great Britain, bore his decided testimony in their favor both as scholars and christians. He also gave a sketch of the condition in which he found Unitarianism on the continent of Europe—in France, Transylvania, and Holland, and particularly in Geneva, where he visited to the place of Servetus' death in company with a Unitarian successor to Calvin in the theological chair—a remarkable proof, he observed, of the efficacy of creeds and fagots in preventing the progress of opinion. The resolution was supported by Mr Bond of Boston, and was accepted—viz.

Resolved, That this Association reciprocate the expressions of sympathy and regard they have received from the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, and rejoice in the exertions of the friends of truth in England, and on the continent of Europe.

Judge Story of Salem, in proposing the fourth resolution noticed the lateness of the hour, which made him unwilling to detain the meeting, though he felt the subject to be one of great interest and importance. He expressed many of his views, especially on the purpose of the framers of our state constitution, and on the argument furnished by law and usage, in regard to the clause concerning the support of religion. In allusion to recent attempts to give this clause a novel construction, and with reference to the great question of religious liberty, he spoke with force and eloquence—and it was only regretted by those who heard him, that he could not in an earlier part of the evening, have uttered his sentiments with yet greater fulness. The resolution, seconded by Rev. Mr Walker of Charlestown, was accepted—viz.

Resolved, That the present time particularly demands the faithful services of the friends of religious liberty.

The following resolution was then offered by Judge Story, was seconded and passed—viz.

Resolved, That the thanks of the Association be returned to the Executive Committee for their able and interesting Report, and that they be requested to have it printed and distributed as a tract.

It being too late for the further transaction of business, Rev. Mr Walker moved, That when this meeting adjourn, it adjourn to meet in the Vestry of the Chauncy Place Church at 8 o'clock tomorrow morning—this motion was seconded and accepted.

Rev. Mr Ware proposed that before the meeting separate, the "Dismission Hymn" be sung. The proposal was received with approbation; and after singing, at half past 10 o'clock, an adjournment was moved and voted.

Wednesday, May 30.—The adjourned meeting was held in Chauncy Place Vestry at 8 A. M. The first business was the choice of officers. Rev. Mr Young and Mr G. F. Thayer were chosen to collect votes.

Rev. Aaron Bancroft, D. D. was unanimously re-elected *President*.

The following gentlemen who were elected last year, and had signified their acceptance, were unanimously rechosen *Vice Presidents*.

Hon. Joseph Story,
Hon. Charles H. Atherton,
Henry Wheaton, Esq.
Henry Payson, Esq.
Martin L. Hurlbut, Esq.
Hon. Samuel Hoar, Jr.
Hon. Joseph Lyman,
Hon. Stephen Longfellow,
Rev. James Taylor,
Hon. William Cranch,
Hon. Samuel S. Wilde.

Rev. Henry Ware, Jr. Rev. James Walker, and

Rev. Samuel Barrett, were unanimously rechosen *Directors*, and Rev. Ezra S. Gannett, *Secretary*.

It being stated that Lewis Tappan, Esq. declined a reelection, it was

Voted, That thanks be returned to the late Treasurer for his faithful and zealous services.

*Samuel Dorr, Esq. was unanimously chosen Treasurer.

On motion of Rev. H. Ware, jr. it was

Voted, That two messengers be appointed by this Association to meet the United States Christian Conference which is to be held at West Bloomfield, N. Y. in September next.

It was afterwards

Voted, That the appointment of these messengers be made by the Executive Committee.

On motion of Mr Gideon F. Thayer, it was

Voted, That it is expedient that the Constitution be so far amended, as to add to the Executive Committee, a Secretary of Foreign Correspondence.

(According to the 9th article of the Constitution this subject will be considered at the next annual meeting, when a definitive vote will be taken upon the proposed amendment.)

On motion of Rev. H. Ware, jr. it was

Voted, That the Executive Committee be directed to make arrangements, by which the future meetings of the Association for the transaction of business, may be held at a more convenient hour.

As no other business remained for disposal, the meeting, on motion of Rev. Dr Ripley of Concord,

Adjourned sine die.

*Mr Dorr having declined this appointment, the Executive Committee, according to the 8th article of the Constitution, elected Henry Rice, Esq. who has accepted the office.

The Executive Committee of the American Unitarian Association, as they send abroad their Second Annual Report, would avail themselves of this opportunity of communicating with their friends, and offer one or two suggestions, which they deem important. An institution, whose purpose is to improve public opinion and feeling through the methods adopted by us, is dependent on pecuniary patronage. Even if manuscripts be provided, they cannot be printed without the means of payment. The committee feel, at this time particularly, the need of more prompt aid from those who have encouraged them to prosecute their work. Their treasury is nearly empty in consequence of the delay of members in paying their annual subscription. In the preceding Report it has been stated that nearly fifteen hundred dollars are due from annual subscribers. The immediate payment of this amount would give an efficiency to the operations of the committee, which they cannot else have. The difficulty of collecting small sums, scattered over the country on the one hand, and the inconvenience of transmitting them on the other, show the advantage of auxiliary associations. These are almost necessary to that activity and energy on which success in our work as in every other depends. If only five or six persons unite themselves for a particular object, they become a centre of attraction to others, their own interest is quickened, and they form a point of observation which is kept distinctly in view by their friends at a distance. The committee do therefore urge the formation of auxiliaries. They would respectfully request every clergyman who is disposed to aid their efforts, to invite individuals of his parish to consult on the measure, and to

adopt the course recommended in the remarks subjoined to the last year's Report, which are reprinted in the appendix. In places destitute of a pastor, this method might be adopted by any individual.

The necessity of early and regular communication from the branches to the Parent Society, is obvious. The existence of auxiliaries will not alone supply our wants. They must contribute promptly, according to their ability. The labor of collecting and transmitting the annual subscriptions must, as has been suggested, lie on the officers of the auxiliary associations, but this labor in each case will be very light. It has been found convenient in some places to establish a depository for the town or parish, under the care of an agent, who shall transact all the financial concerns of the association and be remunerated for any expense that he may incur. This plan would probably be useful in every place.

A misunderstanding has prevailed of the privileges allowed to subscribers. The committee have never pledged themselves to publish any number of tracts annually; they have expressed a *hope*, which they do not yet relinquish, that they may print two every month. But this will depend on the aid they receive from writers and subscribers. They ask only for the means of gratifying a demand which it pains them to leave unanswered. They are anxious to be the almoners of others' intellectual bounty, and to return the pecuniary contributions of their friends in the fruits of thought and experience. They also hope that individual liberality will not be stinted by a regard to personal compensation. The good we would effect is not confined to the members of our association. We wish to send tracts and missionaries to those who are willing to read and hear, that they may be convinced

and be persuaded to cooperate with us. If a member pay one dollar, and receive tracts to this value, he contributes nothing to the *diffusion* of correct sentiments. The committee trust in the good sense, and generosity of the friends of this institution, who must perceive the injustice of demanding more than can, under present circumstances, be granted or accomplished, and who will also see that a favorable change in these circumstances depends not solely on the directors. It cannot be expected that tracts shall be furnished in anticipation of all receipts, or that the committee should make themselves responsible to an indefinite extent. In consequence of some inquiries founded on mistake, the following vote was passed and published in the Christian Register of September 23, 1826.

"Resolved, that every member of the Association is entitled to one copy of every tract, published by the Association during the year for which his subscription is entered."

In compliance with the above vote members may always obtain their tracts by personal application, but the committee would not be justified in defraying the expense of distribution. Wherever a local depository is established, the tracts will be regularly sent by the general agents, if desired, at the expense of the auxiliary. Individual subscribers may receive theirs from the nearest depository.

The committee cherish the hope, that before another anniversary they shall number many new branches and many more life members. A laudable example has been set by ladies and by societies ; may it be generally followed. Our Association, is established and its existence widely known. The doubts entertained by some of its practi-

cability have been met by a successful experiment, the name which it assumed has been raised into favor, its operations are now contemplated with interest by the religious public, it only needs *support*. This is earnestly sought, and confidently expected.

The accumulation of materials for a history of Unitarianism and of religious opinions in this country, is an object worthy of encouragement. No depository of facts and documents illustrating this subject is more suitable than the *bureau* of this American Association. A commencement has been made of such a collection, and the Executive Committee solicit books, pamphlets, manuscripts, or papers of any kind which their friends will place in their care. Individuals will afford them aid by furnishing narratives of former years, or information of events of which they have had personal knowledge. Works in vindication of Unitarian Christianity will be received, and employed to form a library always open to the members of the Association.

APPENDIX.

EXTRACTS FROM THE FIRST ANNUAL REPORT.

"This Association was organized under some disadvantages. Its plan was suggested by a few gentlemen on the evening preceding the last election, at too late an hour to secure the advice and cooperation of many of those whose judgment would be useful in forming, and whose influence would be important in strengthening such a society. The time for a more general and effective concert seemed, however, to have arrived; and the presence of Unitarians from distant towns, who annually assemble in this city, showed the necessity of an immediate effort for the accomplishment of this object. It would have been impossible to ascertain in a few hours the sentiments of the great body of Unitarian Christians, in relation to the measures, which they should adopt for the diffusion of pure religion. From these circumstances, the meeting at which the project of this Association was discussed, and its constitution adopted, was necessarily small. Notice could only be given at the close of the Berry Street Conference on Wednesday morning, that such a meeting would be held in the afternoon. At that meeting, it was unanimously voted, that it is expedient to form a society to be called the American Unitarian Association. At an adjourned meeting, held the next morning, a constitution, reported by a committee appointed for the purpose, was accepted, and the officers required by the constitution were elected. This brief statement will explain the fact, that the existence of this society was unknown to most Unitarians in this city and commonwealth, until some weeks after its organization; and will also show under what doubtful prospects of support it was commenced."

"The Committee have been gratified by the sympathy

expressed for them in the prosecution of their duties by Unitarians near and at a distance. They have been favored with letters from Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, Rhode Island, from all sections of this state, from the city of New York, and from the western part of the state of New York, from Philadelphia, Harrisburg, Northumberland, Pittsburg, and Meadville, in Pennsylvania, from Maryland, from the District of Columbia, from South Carolina, from Kentucky, and from Indiana. In all these letters the same interest is exhibited in the efforts which the Association promises to make for the diffusion of pure Christianity. Many of them have contained interesting accounts of the state of religion in different places, and especially correspondents have furnished the Committee with ample details respecting the history and condition of Unitarians in Pennsylvania. If similar accounts could be obtained from all the states of the Union, they would embody an amount of knowledge, that is now much wanted. And the Committee avail themselves of this opportunity to remind Unitarians, that they will render a service to the cause of truth by communicating facts connected with the progress and present state of Unitarian Christianity."

"While the Committee congratulate the officers and members of the Association on the degree of favor, which has been shown to it, they mean not to deny that objections have been started, and that some have been reluctant to add their names to the list of its supporters. They have labored to show the futility of these objections, and to dissipate the fears expressed by good men, and decided Unitarians, that the new Society might be a source of evil rather than of good, of division rather than of harmony. They have strenuously opposed the opinion, that the object of its founders was to build up a party, to organize an opposition, to perpetuate pride and bigotry. Had they believed that such was its purpose, or such would be its effect, they would have withdrawn themselves from any connexion with so hateful a thing. They thought otherwise, and experience has proved that they did not judge wrongly. They have witnessed an in-

creased zeal for pure and undefiled religion, the religion not of this man nor that party, but of Jesus Christ, our Master and Redeemer, brought into action, if it were not inspired, by the influence of this Association. They have heard words of congratulation, but none of bitterness; and they devoutly believe, that this Society is meant in the providence of God to be instrumental in diffusing the truths and the spirit of that gospel, for which his Son was sent, for which he toiled and suffered, and to establish which he poured out his blood. In the words of the Circular, which they have already quoted, "they care not for adding to the number of those, who merely call themselves Unitarians; but their object is to increase the number of those, who are Christians from examination and conviction; the number of consistent believers, whose lives comport with their principles; the number of those, who feel the influence and power of the precepts of Jesus Christ.' In this cause, the cause of man's highest interest, the cause of universal love, they believe this Association is willing to employ all its energies and resources; and commending it to the favor of our Father in heaven, for whose glory they humbly trust it was established, they feel a confidence, which much disappointment alone can destroy, that it will be a blessing to future generations. It will, they hope, scatter the seeds of spiritual knowledge, which shall spring up in usefulness on earth, and shall yield a harvest of everlasting glory."

The following remarks were appended to the First Report.

"It will have been seen by the reader, that it was recommended at the annual meeting, 'that as far as practicable, auxiliaries be formed to the Association in every Unitarian congregation.' The Executive Committee have prepared some articles of association for such auxiliaries, which are annexed. They merely propose such a Constitution, as a convenient bond of union, and as calculated to give simplicity and uniformity, if it should be generally adopted, to the arrangements of the

Association. According to the plan here offered, the auxiliaries are composed of subscribers to the General Association, which is thought by the Committee preferable to the usual method of belonging to the parent institution only indirectly, and in consequence of a connexion with the auxiliary. It is proper however to state, for those who may adopt the latter course, that by a vote of the Executive Committee, passed some months since, no association can be acknowledged as auxiliary, to which the terms of subscription are less than those fixed in the Constitution of the General Association. The propriety of this rule must be obvious to any one, especially if another vote of the Committee be considered, by which every member is entitled to a copy of every tract published by the Association. Tracts are also sold to agents and to auxiliary associations, at a large discount. To these two votes the 4th article of the annexed Constitution refers. The purpose of these auxiliary associations is two fold. They will be a means of increasing and perpetuating the interest felt in the American Unitarian Association, and will present the most effectual method of securing for it friends, funds and intelligence, from every part of the country. With this view it is required that an annual report be made from each branch to the parent society, the directors of which will thus be made acquainted with the religious condition of different sections, and be enabled to issue such publications, and make such appropriations, as shall best accomplish the ends of the Association. It is therefore hoped, that the annual reports of the auxiliaries will contain such statements, as may assist the Executive Committee in their duties. The chief good, however, expected from such associations, is the increase of social and practical religion among their members. The frequent meeting of those, who shall assemble for religious purposes, to advise and assist one another in the support of religious charities, it is thought, must be favorable to personal character, and must increase that sympathy and cooperation, which are among the chief objects of the Unitarian Association."

We, the Subscribers, desirous to aid the operations of the American Unitarian Association, do hereby associate ourselves for that purpose, and agree to the following articles by way of

CONSTITUTION.

1. This Association shall be "The Association of Auxiliary to the American Unitarian Association."

2. The objects of this Association shall be, in general, those of the American Unitarian Association, namely, "to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity."

3. This Association shall be composed of members of the American Unitarian Association; i. e. of persons who have each contributed $30 as a life subscription, or who pay at least $1 a year, to that Association.

4. A depository for tracts shall be appointed by this Association, at which each member, besides receiving gratis one copy of all the tracts of the American Unitarian Association, shall be allowed to purchase any number of them for distribution, at per cent discount.

5. The business of this Association shall be conducted by an agent, or by a committee, consisting of members, who shall superintend the depository, correspond with the executive committee of the General Association, pay over to the Treasurer thereof the monies due, and make to the Secretary a yearly report of its doings.

SUBSCRIBERS' NAMES.	LIFE SUB.	ANN. SUB.

In the First Annual Report it was stated that a meeting of gentlemen friendly to the Association was held in Boston in April, 1826. At that meeting a committee was appointed to prepare a circular, from which the following extracts are taken.

"The want of union among Christians of our denomination, is felt to be a great evil by those, who have directed their attention to this subject. Living in an age of unusual religious excitement, surrounded by numerous sects, all of which are zealously employed in disseminating their peculiar tenets, we should be wanting in duty to ourselves, and be doing injustice to the doctrines we profess, if we should allow them to fail in exercising their due influence, for the want of a corresponding zeal and interest. Unitarians are often charged with lukewarmness and indifference to the cause of religion. We will not undertake to say how far this charge is well founded; but we will say that much of it is rather apparent than real, and is owing to a want of concert among ourselves. Our exertions have not been apparent, because insulated; and the contributions of many of our friends have been thrown into the treasuries of other denominations of Christians, from the want of some proper objects among ourselves, upon which they could be bestowed. We feel confident, that there are among us men of zeal and energy, who are both willing and able to exert themselves in the cause of religion; and that others, who are now indifferent to the subject, might by sympathy and encouragement be excited to similar exertions."

"The great end of this Association is the promotion of pure morals and practical piety. We value our doctrines only so far as they evidently are the revelation of the will and character of God, and so far as they tend to improve the religious, moral, and intellectual condition of mankind. Believing that from their simple, sublime, and elevating character, they are peculiarly adapted to the wants of all conditions of mankind, to the ignorant and simple, as well as the learned and gifted; believing too, that they are more eminently calculated than any

other views of Christianity to warm the heart, to interest, elevate and purify the feelings, and to develope all the faculties of the mind, we are desirous that they be known and understood and felt by every individual in our community."

"Whilst the friends of this institution would endeavor to establish correct principles and awaken a deep religious feeling in our own churches and community; they would also diffuse abroad the knowledge and influence of the gospel of our Lord and Saviour. For this end, it is their intention, so far as their funds will admit of it, to assist destitute churches in the support of public worship, and to send missionaries to those parts of our country, where they may be particularly wanted. This is a subject, in relation to which serious and reflecting minds cannot doubt that there are solemn and important duties to perform. If we regard the gospel as a blessing, if we have imbibed any of its spirit, if we have felt any of that charity, which forms so essential a feature in the christian character; that charity, which confines itself to no limits, but which is as boundless as the universe, which, beginning at home, extends itself to all conditions of men, to all orders of moral beings; that charity, which limits itself not to the relief of temporal wants and sufferings, and the promotion of temporal happiness, but extending itself beyond this world, points out the only way and means which lead to eternal peace and happiness and joy; if we have imbibed this spirit, and, at the same time feel, that the gospel is the richest, the most invaluable blessing, which God has bestowed on us, then there can be no question as to our duty.

"Moreover, if we are convinced, that God has shed new light into our minds, in relation to his will and character, we are bound in gratitude to Him to exert ourselves in its diffusion. Let it not be said, that if the doctrines we profess are correct, they will certainly prevail, and that they need no assistance from us. Truth, indeed, is mighty, for it nerves the mind, gives to it confidence, energy and power, and animates it to great and unwearied exertions. But God operates through second

causes, and having sent our religion into the world, he left it to man to support and disseminate it. It was introduced into the world, and has been sustained and transmitted to the present generation, through much labor and persecution and suffering. But the great work is not yet completed, much remains to be done by us. Let it not be said of us, that we are unworthy of the blessings we have received; but possessing the means and opportunities of doing much towards this cause, let us so use them, that we shall finally be able to render a good account."

The auxiliary Unitarian Association of Philadelphia have printed a small tract, containing their constitution with some valuable introductory remarks, from which the following extracts are taken.

"It is no wonder that associations of men for the maintenance of particular religious views should be regarded with distrust, when it is considered what an undue influence they have oftentimes exerted, and how directly they have aided in retarding the progress of free inquiry. Enormous as the abuses of associations have been, the very existence of abuses intimates that this mode of operation (by means of association) is capable of a lawful and important use, and may be employed with great power in the cause of truth. We thus judge. If men, by forming themselves into societies for the support of certain doctrines, have succeeded in effecting their object, surely by the same means the great doctrine of *religious freedom* may be advanced. Now let it be remembered that to establish this doctrine more firmly in the world is one of the principal objects of our Association, acknowledged in every other doctrine and opinion which we may labor to extend. It is our aim to diffuse a *rational faith;* and as we can have no idea of such a faith that does not involve the exercise of private judgment—the liberty of thought, we feel that we cannot in-

fringe the sacred freedom of the mind without defeating the main object for which we are associated.

"Every thing conspires to impress us with the vast importance of diffusing more liberal views of christian truth. The erroneous systems of religion which are prevalent, their effects upon private happiness, the dishonorable ideas which they help to cherish of the divine character and government, the obstructions that they throw in the way of religious liberty and free inquiry, the utter rejection of Christianity by intelligent men which they have produced and are still producing; while, on the other hand, the immense value to human virtue of correct notions of God and duty, the peace of mind which they establish, the cheerful light which they throw over our existence both present and future, and above all, their inseparable union with the cause of the most perfect religious freedom; all these things impose upon us a weight of obligation that cannot well be estimated. Add to this our peculiar situation as the inhabitants of a land advancing in unexampled prosperity, and consequently in a state of great moral danger, depending for the very existence of its present happy form of society upon the strictest and most uniform observance of the great principles of morality and religion; we can have no plainer duty before us than that of doing all that in us lies for the diffusion of those views which we deem the most conducive to the best welfare of our fellow men.

"In our circumstances a deficiency of earnest christian zeal would furnish some ground for an inference either against our cause, or against those engaged in it; either the system is defective, or we do not understand and appreciate it. But God forbid that we should have embraced views which render us indifferent to the most solemn subjects, and careless of contributing our efforts to the advancement of human happiness. If the fault is in ourselves, then we would repair our error, and dispense with 'the poor and beggarly' principles of a worldly wisdom, such as measuring ourselves by others and being satisfied with ourselves because we do as well as our fellows, and resort to the elevated standard of christian duty, and try to bring our characters and our

efforts up to its requisitions. We would set ourselves seriously at work to become more thoroughly acquainted with the views we profess to hold, and then our feeling in behalf of their diffusion will become more distinct and vivid. At the same time we would embrace every opportunity of extending a knowledge of our faith."

FIRST QUARTERLY REPORT*

OF THE

BOSTON MISSIONARY.

To the Executive Committee of the

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

GENTLEMEN,

I entered upon the duties of the mission, among the poor of this city, to which you appointed me, on the 5th of last November; and I have thought it to be proper, in this service, not to visit in any family, which is visited by any settled minister of the city as a part of his flock.

Within the last three months, I have taken fifty families into my pastoral charge. A few of them have lived in the city but six, or twelve months. Some, however, who have been here many years, and others who were born in the city, are kept from connexion with our religious societies by their poverty. They cannot afford to hire seats in our churches. Some, too, by the frequency of their removals, are now in the neighborhood of one, and now of another, of the churches in the city, on whose services they occasionally attend. The intellectual, moral, and religious character of some whom I visit, is very highly respectable. But the exposures of great poverty are very affecting. The rooms in which the poor live

* One edition of this Report has been printed, but as its circulation was confined to Boston, and the whole edition is distributed, the Executive Committee have directed its republication.

are often as cold and cheerless as can well be imagined; and the difficulty of obtaining clothes and food sufficient for their comfort is very great. The fire-places of these rooms are so deep, that a large quantity of fuel is required to procure even a little warmth; and with all the aid which is obtained from the city, from our charitable societies, from benevolent individuals, and from the streets, much, very much is endured in such a winter as the present. Nor is it as easy as some think it to be, for all to find employment, by which they may earn enough for a comfortable subsistence. Hence, too often, come intemperance and dishonesty.

My attention has constantly been directed to the children of the families in which I visit; and I have done what I could to persuade parents faithfully to keep their children at school. Through the kindness of friends who have supplied my poors' purse, I have enabled parents to send a considerable number of children to school, who were kept at home by the want of shoes, or a shawl. Of the result of my mission, I am not prepared to say much at present. I have cause, however, I think, to believe that no preceding three months of my life have been passed more usefully. I am received with great kindness and affection in the families in which I visit; and, great as are the vice and suffering which I have sometimes been called to witness, I have also found encouragements and compensations in this service, which will be among the happiest recollections of my life.

On the second day of my mission, I visited a widow, who was passing rapidly to the grave in consumption; and I ministered to her till the 27th ultimo, on which day she died. She was thirty-five years of age, and had three children. I particularize her, only because I have the pleasure to tell you, that neither in my reading, nor in my ministry of twenty-five years, have I met with a more impressive example of the power, which the simplest principles of our religion, when they have full possession of the heart, may exert in forming a perfectly christian character. Her daily sufferings were very great. But the ruling principle in her soul was, *love to God.* This was the

source of all her immediate comfort, and of all her hope as a disciple of Christ. "O Sir," she had repeatedly said to me, "I would not exchange my sick bed, with the love of God which I feel in my heart, for ten thousand worlds." "I can glorify God in my greatest sufferings, for my love of him triumphs over all my distresses." "Adversity," she said, "is better than prosperity. I once lived without God; but I have passed through many scenes of trouble, and in trouble I learned to know and to love God. The hardest trial to which I have been called has been, to give up my children. But now that I have given them up to God, I look upon them without a feeling of anxiety." Such, indeed, were her conceptions of God's government, and of the purposes of suffering; such her love of God, and her desire to possess and to maintain the spirit of Christ, that she refused opiates by which her sufferings might have been alleviated; preferring to endure distress, rather than have her mind in the smallest degree enfeebled in its exercises, or checked in its aspirations after a nearer acquaintance with Him, who was the rock of her confidence, and the fountain to her heart of unutterable blessedness. In all my visits to this poor, but intelligent, most amiable and pious woman, I never heard from her any of the technical language of a sectarian. We were soon friends; and I shall never forget the emotion with which, a short time before she expired, she said, "I bless God, who has sent you to me, to enlighten my way through the dark valley of the shadow of death." If no other circumstance to cheer and strengthen me should occur in the year of service on which I have entered, than the privilege of ministering to this poor widow, I shall be well compensated for all the toils to which it may call me.

I may tell you, likewise, that on the 27th of November, I was called to visit a man who was confined to his bed by a fever. I was pleased with the neatness and order which appeared in his family. But this man had thought little of religion, and had lived without prayer. Before he left his sick bed, I have reason to think that he offered the prayer of penitence, of gratitude, and of hope; and, since his recovery, he has uniformly read prayers in

his family, morning and evening. I have the assurance of this man, and of his wife, that they will faithfully maintain this practice.

On sabbath evening, the 3d of December, by the assistance which I received from an association of private Christians, with which I am connected in the city, I was enabled to begin a course of religious services in the upper chamber of the circular building at the bottom of Portland-street. These services have been continued from that time to the present ; and as a lease of the room is taken for a year, I shall probably continue to preach there on the evenings of the sabbath. In these services, which are very well attended, I have the aid of several of the gentlemen of the above named association. A Sunday School was begun in my lecture room on the 10th of December ; and the children of many families which I visit, as well as of other families, are very faithfully taught there.

I have occasionally preached both to the men, and to the women, in the House of Correction. On the 27th of December, I visited Colson, who was executed on the 1st instant for piracy and murder. From the time of my first visit, I was in the cell with him every day ; and this too is a part of my service, for which I think that I have much cause to bless God. I found this man terribly profane and wicked. But I soon found that he had not lost every element of moral feeling. After the visits of a few days, I observed that he fell upon his knees when I was about to pray with him. Some time after this, he began to respond the *amen* at the close of our prayers. And at last, such was the strength of his emotions, that while I was praying with him, he has broken out in an importunity of supplication, the most heart-rending which I have ever heard from the lips of man. In addition to my daily visits to his cell, I passed with him the evening previous to his death ; and I was with him on the next morning, till a few minutes before the time when he was led out to be executed. I had said and done all that I could say or do, to affect, and to direct his mind ; and feeling, as I did, that my duty towards him was done, I left him. He died, as I am told, in the manner in which

I hoped that he would die ; with the prayer in his heart, and upon his lips, *God be merciful to me a sinner !*

You ask me, how much time and exertion my services require ? I answer, that I give to them all my time, and all my strength. Most of those whom I now visit live at the north part of the town. But I also visit families in the eastern, western, and southern sections of the city ; and not a week passes, in which I am not extending my charge. Two more missionaries, within three months, might find duty enough to fill up every waking hour.

It may not be amiss to add, that I have numbered two hundred and eighty three visits made to the people of my charge. Besides these, however, I have been into many families, of whom I learned that they regularly worship with some one of our religious societies, and whom, therefore, I visited no more. Nor do I include in this number of visits, those which I made to Colson in prison ; nor those which I have made in the house of correction.

With great respect,

JOSEPH TUCKERMAN.

Boston, February 5th, 1827.

SECOND QUARTERLY REPORT*

OF THE

BOSTON MISSIONARY.

To the Executive Committee of the

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

GENTLEMEN,

Within the past six months I have been connected, as a Christian minister, with more than a hundred fami-

* This Report has not before been printed.

lies. Some of these families have been broken up, and others have removed where I have not been able to find them. But I have still more than ninety in my charge; and, within the last three months, I have made a little over five hundred visits.

You will readily believe, that it would be very easy to give you a long report of what I have seen and heard in these visits, and a long detail of what I have said, and hoped, and feared. Should I ever find time to write upon these subjects, I may perhaps bring them in some form, before the public. But general statements are all that you will expect from me.

Among the families which I visit as their pastor, there are some which not only are not poor, but whose circumstances, in respect to property, are very comfortable; and I have great pleasure in telling you, that they cooperate with me, as they have opportunity, in my plans and efforts for the relief and improvement of the poor. I am connected with some families of this class, which would be a blessing to any community.

Another class of those whom I visit consists of families, which, from various causes, have not been able to accumulate property. There are widows, and there are some husbands, who can provide for their families, and who maintain order, and find happiness, in their families, while they all have health, and while they can find regular employment. But in a long failure of the employment on which they depend for their support, or in a long sickness, the little that was laid up is exhausted; and, if they are not relieved by private bounty, they must incur debts, which weigh down the spirits, and produce feelings of discouragement and misery, for relief from which they resort to *intemperance*. I have cause to believe that, through the kindness of those who have supplied my poors' purse, I have been enabled to do important good among this class of my new friends, by administering to their relief in the time when relief was most wanted. And I am sure that this is a charity, on which, if they witness it, angels may smile with heavenly complacency. I think that I have witnessed aspirations of as pure a gratitude, for a small bestowment, which, however, at the time

was greatly wanted, as often ascends to heaven. Even a little which is so given, by saving him or her who receives it from the discouragements of debt, may save them also from intemperance, from pauperism, and from ruin.

I have much wished to do something for the recovery of the intemperate. But I have been still more solicitous to do what may be done, to save those from intemperance, who are constantly exposed to it; and of whom indeed we may well marvel, if they become not its victims. I wish always to act upon the principle, that human nature is never to be given up; that there is no condition of the vicious so desperate, as to forbid efforts for their recovery. I have therefore no sympathy with those who say to us, "let the confirmed drunkard perish." While he lives, he is not without the pale of God's mercy, for it is this mercy that sustains him, even while he so wickedly abuses it. But I believe that very much may be done by frequent intercourse, by faithful conversation, and by well selected tracts, to restrain from this desolating sin. In this department of my service, I have reason to hope that I have not altogether labored in vain.

I visit in a few very vicious, and very corrupted families. Whether I am thus doing any immediate good, is indeed very doubtful. But the time of sickness, or of some other great affliction, may come to them, when they may be in a condition to receive impressions, of which they are now unsusceptible; and I shall be well repaid for the sacrifices that are required in maintaining an acquaintance with them, if I may then be an instrument of bringing them to repentance and to God.

I have spoken of the frequency of the removals of some whom I visit. There are families which, I believe, are never more than a few months in a place. They are compelled to remove by inability to pay their rent; and, to escape from the little debts which they have contracted in the neighborhood in which, for a short time, they have been located. They go to no church; and they are known by no minister, unless indeed a missionary steps in to visit them. And yet these are not always very vicious families. The husband of this class, or the widowed mother, or the mother who is forsaken by her husband, is thriftless,

inefficient, and not entirely temperate; but yet not confirmed in any of the grosser vices. Here, then, I think the service of a missionary to be greatly useful. He does what he can to animate and encourage these parents to better efforts than they have yet made for themselves, and their families. He takes care that their children are kept at school. He gives to them in his conversation, and in the tracts which he leaves with them, all the religious instruction they receive. Without his care, they would be beyond the reach of any of the direct influences of our religion.

Let me say a word of the moral exposures of the poor, for they are indeed hardly to be conceived but by those who are intimately acquainted with the poor. We must go into the rooms in which they live, and see how they live, and what they suffer there, to feel as we should feel for them, and to realize the extent and the strength of their claims upon us. Take the case of a mother, whose intemperate husband is daily spending his small earnings to obtain the rum which he drinks daily; who is herself working like a slave, when she can get work, to procure bread for her children; whose ragged children are not only every day so treated by their father, that they lose, as far as children can lose, all affection for him, but who are at once the daily witnesses of his profaneness and degradation, and who are even daily encouraged by him to disobey their mother; I say, what are you to look for in these children, but that they will be as vicious and debased as their father? I can take you from house to house into families of this description. Or, suppose the case of an intemperate mother, or where both parents are intemperate. Rum is here the chief ingredient of breakfast, of dinner, and of supper. Is it wonderful, then, that there should be not a few among us, who are drunkards at the age of 14 or 15 years? Or, does it excite any surprise, that children who are reared under such influences, *will not* go to school? At 9 or 10 years of age they are wholly beyond parental control. Their *home* is in the streets; and they go to the habitations of their

parents, only to obtain a supply of the wants which they cannot supply elsewhere. It is a matter of course, therefore, that they should not only be intemperate, but profane, deceitful and dishonest. No plan could be devised for their moral ruin, more certain in its results, than the very manner in which they are now living. Will any one say, that this is a necessary evil? I cannot think so. The obligation is most solemn upon those to whom God has given the means of rescuing these young immortals from perdition, to attempt at least what may be attempted for their rescue. These children are now in a regular course of training for the House of Correction, and for the State Prison. My heart has ached to see a mother, and to hear her sobs of anguish, at the House of Correction, while she was visiting her son there, who was only 14 years old; and to see this boy, after weeping for a few moments with his agonized mother, return to be a companion of convicts, with five or six of whom he must be shut up at night in a cell, where he may learn more of the mysteries of iniquity in eight nights, than he would acquire in as many years by his own unaided experience. Government has a right to employ any means that are requisite for the prevention of so great an evil; and a power should be delegated to men who will faithfully exercise it, of taking children who are so exposed from the condition in which they now are, and of placing them, as far as may be, beyond the reach of the temptations, which otherwise will inevitably prove their destruction. I am aware that the difficulties of the case are great. But they are not insuperable.—I suggest the subject, only because I wish that attention may be directed to it.

For some weeks past, either on Thursday or Saturday afternoon, I have met the children who live in the neighborhood of my Lecture Room, to pass an hour there. The time so passed we call *the pleasant hour.* It is opened and closed with a very short prayer, and religious instruction is one of the objects of the meeting. But this instruction is given rather incidentally, than directly. I give them familiar lectures upon subjects of natural

history; and I begin each exercise by questions respecting the preceding lecture. The service is popular among the children; and I hope that it will be a means of exciting in them a thirst of knowledge, a taste at once for intellectual and moral gratification, and an early reverence and love of Him, of whose wisdom and goodness I am thus enabled to furnish them with so many testimonies in his works.

The Sunday evening services of the Lecture Room are continued, and the room is uniformly well filled with attentive hearers. I wish that it were possible to obtain a permanent free lecture room in the section of the city in which I now officiate on Sunday evenings. This might be done at a small cost, compared with the good that might be looked for from it. Our present room is not large enough to accommodate all who are disposed to unite with us. Besides, some aged people find it difficult, in the evening, to ascend two flights of stairs. If we could obtain a cheap building as a permanent place of worship, I think that it would not be difficult to obtain a supply of the pulpit half of each Sunday, as well as for the evening service. Is there no one among us who is at once able, and who so loves the poor, that he is willing *to build for them a synagogue?*

Very respectfully,

JOSEPH TUCKERMAN.

Boston, May 5, 1827.

MISSION OF INQUIRY TO THE WESTERN STATES.

On pages 8 and 9 (of the Report) mention is made of Mr Thomas' journey to the Western States. During his absence it was his custom to write letters in the form of a journal, which were at different times sent to the Secretary, and since his return he has prepared an abstract of the intelligence collected by him on his tour. From these papers the following extracts are made, with the design of showing his route, and the opportunities which he enjoyed for accomplishing the objects of his mission,

and also of communicating to the members of the Association such information obtained by him as may be generally interesting; many personal details and remarks are omitted, as they were not intended for publication. Most of the extracts now given have already been printed in the Christian Register, but it seems proper to offer here a general view of Mr Thomas' labors. This is all which is attempted in the following abridgment of his journals.

Mr Thomas left Boston April 10, 1826, and proceeded by way of Providence to New York and Philadelphia. These places are too well known to need any notice. From Philadelphia he took the stage coach to Harrisburg, the seat of government of Pennsylvania, where he found the Unitarians exerting themselves to build a church, which they have since completed. He says, "the present members of the society are very zealous, and their opinions are spreading as rapidly as could be expected. It is an important and flourishing place." He next visited Northumberland, where he was cordially received by Rev. Mr Kay, of whom he thus speaks:

"I know of nothing but pure zeal, and the grave of Priestley, that can induce him to remain here, for he has talents that would support him handsomely in New-England. I have spent much time in the family of Mr Bellas of Sunbury, about two miles from N. He has given you so particular an account of the religious affairs of this place and its vicinity, that I shall only add a description of the meeting houses in Northumberland. Of these there are three; those of the Methodists and Presbyterians are one story wooden buildings, not painted, and I should judge 16 by 18 feet. The Unitarian church is a two story brick building, 25 or 30 feet square."

Mr Thomas pursued his journey to Pittsburg, where he was detained by sickness, in the family of Mr Swartzwelder, the minister of the small Unitarian society of that place. From Pittsburg (Penn.) he writes:

"Of the eastern and middle parts of this State your correspondents have given you more information than I can. Since my arrival here I have made many inquiries concerning the religious and moral condition of the part of

the State west of the mountains. I find from Mr Swartzwelder, who is well acquainted with this part of the State, having travelled eleven years as an itinerant Methodist, and who is now excommunicated for his Unitarian views, that there is much more attention paid to religion than in the middle and eastern counties. The principal denominations this side of the mountains, are the Presbyterians and Methodists. There are a few Lutherans, Catholics, and Covenanters. There is much bigotry and fanaticism, together with a general regard to religion and public worship, though of the 'orthodox' kind. There are two or three churches in almost every town. The Presbyterian clergy are required to have some knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages, and are tolerably well informed, better than those of any other sect. The General Assembly of Presbyterians throughout the States, have passed a vote for the establishment of a Theological Seminary in the West. In Washington and Greene counties, at the south west corner of the State, a gentleman, whose name is Campbell, has circulated a paper of a liberal cast, which has effected something towards doing away the thick cloud of bigotry that enveloped them. In this State there are no public schools except for the children of paupers. I have heard of but one missionary or agent in these parts from any society whatever; and he is a Methodist, travelling with the professed object of exciting attention to religion among the masonic lodges in the West.—I can give you a more particular account of this place. Pittsburg contains about 12,000 inhabitants, collected from all parts of the world. It is a universal workshop for mechanics of every description. Among this heterogeneous and smoky mass of population, the three principal sects are the Presbyterians, Methodists, and Catholics. Of the three, the Presbyterians are the most numerous. They have two churches, and number from 800 to 1000 members. The Methodists have two churches, and number between 7 and 800 members. The Catholics have one church, and from 6 to 700 members. The Episcopalians have one church and from 3 to 400 members; I understand it to be a rich society. Besides these, the Unitarians, Covenanters, Secederes, Lutherans

or German Reformed, and the Unionists have each one church. These societies are small, and I have not been able to form a probable estimate of their numbers; with the exception of the Unitarian society. The Unionists are a few malecontents who left the Presbyterians, Covenanters, and Seceders, and formed a society by themselves. The Unitarian society consists of about 30 members, who openly avow their sentiments and meet regularly on Sundays. They have an average congregation of from 50 to 60 individuals. The members live in hope, supporting one another by friendly intercourse, kind offices, and the warmest christian feelings, unalloyed by violence towards their oppressors, or unprofitable zeal among themselves.—I have made several attempts to find a bookseller of a different denomination, who would take a few tracts on commission, for prejudices are here so strong, they will not take them from a Unitarian, but I have not succeeded. Even printers will not insert communications in answer to direct attacks on Unitarians. Our friends in this part of the country look with confidence on our cause, since the formation of the Association, and the introduction of system, to aid our efforts. Only the sight of one from the East, who can assure them that there is one spot where Unitarianism is not a reproach, seems to increase their efforts and their zeal.—As to obtaining subscribers to the Association, I find they do not think it worth while to subscribe $1, and draw their tracts from so great a distance, and whatever they can expend they believe will be better employed in supporting the cause immediately around them; so that I do not expect to get a single subscriber, unless I find some isolated Unitarian, who is not in the neighborhood of any society constantly requiring his assistance.—I intend to visit the shire towns of the counties bordering on, and near to the river on the Ohio side, until I come to Kentucky. I shall then, by the advice of all our friends here, travel on horseback."

From Pittsburg, Mr Thomas passed, as he intended, into the state of Ohio; in which as he prosecuted his journey, he made the following remarks.

"Jefferson county, Ohio, contains about 19,000 in-

habitants. The Presbyterians compose one third; the Methodists another; and 1000 Quakers, with Episcopalians, Seceders, and Christians, another. Of the three last sects, the Episcopalians are the most numerous; the Christians are few.—Steubenville, the county town, contains about 2500 inhabitants. There is here a large society of Presbyterians; they have a respectable young man, from Princeton College, for their minister. Their number I have not been able to ascertain. The Methodists, in 1824, returned, as members of their society in this place, 285. Their increase has not been rapid. There is a small, but respectable society of Episcopalians; besides these, there are Quakers, a few Seceders, and Christians. The society of Christians, during the last year, amounted to 120; they have, for some time past, been destitute of a preacher, and their numbers have decreased. I was here introduced to a young man, who has come from the centre of the Christians in the west part of this state, to watch over and foster the interests of this society. He gave me the names of several of the elders among the Christians in the western part of the state. He states that the Christian denomination are universally opposed to the doctrine of the Trinity, and that many of them carry their opinions against church government to the extent, that they are unwilling to have any kind of ministry separate from the gifted members of the congregation. This is the point on which they are divided. I shall however be able to give a better account of them hereafter.—In Harrison county, joining Jefferson on the west, I was informed, that the Presbyterians and Methodists are so nearly equal, that religious tenets form the point of contention in their elections; the casting vote is in the power of the Quakers.—Wheeling, on the Virginia side of the river, contains near 3000 inhabitants. I attended the Episcopal church in the morning; the congregation, to the number of perhaps 250, comfortably filled the house. It was communion day, and the minister thus addressed them. 'I have here nothing to do with names or sects; I would that all who feel themselves penitent sinners, should partake with us at the table of our common Lord.' The next morning, Mr

Armstrong, the clergyman, concluding, from my seat in church, that I was a stranger, called on me. I found him an intelligent gentleman, and a Trinitarian without bigotry. He was born in Scotland, educated in England, and is near 60 years old. His church, he has been five years in forming. The communicants are 42 or 3. He visits many places in the vicinity of Wheeling. In the afternoon, I attended the Presbyterian church. The congregation consisted of about 100;—there were, probably, twice that number in the morning, as church is here less frequented in the afternoon. The preaching was of a respectable order. The Presbyterian church had the attendance of between 50 and 60 children at their Sunday School, between meetings. The Catholics have a small society in this place, but no minister. The Methodists are numerous; in 1824, they returned 865 as members of their society; they have somewhat decreased since that time.

"From Wheeling, I recrossed the river, and rode 10 miles, to St Clairsville, the shire town of Belmont county. The town contains 720 inhabitants. There are Quaker, Episcopalian, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches in the place: they are built near together, and are one or two story brick buildings, without steeples or bells. I left St Clairsville for Marietta. At Morristown, 11 miles, I stopped to rest my horse. Here a circumstance took place, the relation of which, I trust, needs no apology. I was making inquiries of the aged inn-keeper concerning the christian denominations in the place, and among others, I asked him if there were any Unitarians; 'What!' says he, 'you don't call them christians!' 'Yes Sir, I do.' 'Why folks say here, they are Deists.' 'Do you know Sir, what they profess?' 'No, they don't believe anything.' I then handed him a little book containing the Unitarian faith; after he had read it, I asked him how he liked it. He said there was no hurt in it; it was like his bible. I gave him one or two tracts, and the old man bade me a kind good by, convinced that there was a difference between a Unitarian and a Deist. Morristown is small, containing

about 200 inhabitants. There is no educated minister in the place. I next stopped at Barnesville, 12 miles; it is a thriving place containing about 350 inhabitants. There are here two small churches belonging to the Quakers and Presbyterians.—Wed. 17th I rode 11 miles to Woodsfield, the shire town of Monroe county. I there found a farmer who was a Unitarian. He said there were three or four in the place, and solicited some tracts for distribution. He wished me to stay over night and preach in the evening, stating that there was no settled minister or established church in the place except the Methodist. Woodsfield is small, containing about 300 inhabitants, and has a log court house with a family in the basement story.—May 18th I arrived at Marietta. It is the most beautiful town I ever visited. It combines all the beauties of town and country scenery; but when you leave the public road that lies along the river, the streets are grown over with grass, there appears to be a perfect stagnation of business, many of the houses are left desolate, the occupants having been, some swept off, and others frightened away by fevers. The town has contained 1700 inhabitants, but within the last three years that number has diminished. There are but two regular societies, the Congregational and the Methodist. The Methodists are very few, their church is a small one story building.—The ministers in this part of the State, with the exception of the Presbyterians, are of the lower orders of society. The churches and ministers are almost entirely confined to the shire towns; the inhabitants are scattered along the creeks and small streams, so that distance prevents the formation of churches in other parts of the counties. The clergy are assisting us by declaiming against us; they thus excite a spirit of inquiry. The south-east part of Ohio contains many settlers from New England. They are dissatisfied with the Presbyterian church government, as something arbitrary, and to them, an innovation. They need some one to tell them and others of Unitarianism, what it is, for here it is represented by the Presbyterians as worse than Deism. In the shire towns, I think Unitarian preachers could obtain the use of the court-houses, and they would have respectable audiences; but they

would receive little open support at first.—Monroe, Morgan, Washington, Meigs, Gallia, Jackson, Lawrence, Scioto and Pike counties are rough and thinly settled. The inhabitants cannot, in one day's ride, get together in sufficient numbers to form congregations. They are generally a sober and religious people. Gallipolis is about a third as large as Marietta, and the other parts of Gallia county, together with Meigs, Lawrence, Pike, Jackson and Scioto counties are so rough and so thinly settled, that it would be useless to visit them. It is the poorest part of the state. To go from Marietta to Athens, and thence to Chilicothe, thence to West Union will be nearer and more useful than a river route.

From Marietta Mr Thomas accordingly rode to Athens, where he says, "I was introduced to President Wilson, and the professors of the Institution, who are firm Presbyterians. There is but one meetinghouse in the town, and that a small building, belonging to the Methodists. The Presbyterians occupy the court-house. The Presbyterians and the Methodists are equal as to numbers. There are several Christians in the county.—From Athens, I visited Chilicothe, in Ross county, 50 miles. Having made a change in my route, I had no letters to this place, but from general inquiries I learnt that the town contained about 2800 inhabitants, that the Methodists are generally thought to be the most numerous, and the Presbyterians next. The Episcopalians and Baptists are few. There are some Universalists, but they seldom have preaching: there are also some scattered Christians, but I could hear of no societies among them.—From Chilicothe, I went to West Union, in Adams county, 60 miles. I was there introduced to the Presbyterian clergyman, who told me that there were three Presbyterian churches in the county, of 100 members each, that his church numbered 130. The Methodists in 1824, made returns of 814, as members of their society in this county, under the head, 'Brush Creek.' There are a few scattered Christians in this county. In Brown county, joining Adams on the west, I was informed that the Christians were very numerous. In this, and the neighboring counties the Sabbath and its institutions

are punctually regarded ; Sunday schools are very common, especially among the Presbyterians."

"On looking over my memoranda, I find a request, that I would visit Mr Sarjent, who, I incidentally heard, was resident near West Union, on Brush Creek, (Ohio) superintending the publication of his paper, which is executed at the West Union press. He also has a society 7 miles out of town. On Sunday, May 28th, I attended his meeting, where I found a congregation assembled, to the number of 48 or 50. I entered their small one story log meeting-house, with the old man, who shook hands with his people as he passed to the opposite side of the room, where a bench, made by splitting a log and setting up part of it on four pegs, was appropriated to his use. After he had seated himself, he took his saddle bags across his knees, and drew out a bundle nicely rolled up in a piece of deerskin, which proved to be his bible and hymn book. After a few impressive remarks on the occasion for which we were assembled, he commenced his services by reading and singing a hymn, at the close of which the whole congregation knelt in prayer. As the old man raised his eyes and withered hands towards heaven, his white locks fell back on his shoulders, and he seemed like devotion personified. He continued in prayer nearly an hour, during which time there was neither shouting nor groaning ; the only responses were occasional amens, uttered in tones of deep devotional feeling. After the prayer he continued to speak for two or three hours, during which time many of them felt the want of temporal as well as spiritual food, and drew forth their several budgets of provision, which they very quietly disposed of. I joined them in the concluding prayer, and I can truly say that I never felt in a more devotional frame, than while thus worshipping that Being, who accepts our heart rendered services, whether offered beneath a vaulted dome, or a brush-thatched hovel. Mr Sarjent and his hearers are united in their sentiments, which are these. They believe in one God, the Father Almighty ; they believe Jesus to be inferior and dependent on God ; they deny the natural immortality of the soul, asserting that Jesus of Nazareth, he alone hath immor-

tality, and that, after the fall immortality was the gift which Christ came to bestow on his followers only; they deny the doctrine of endless misery, believing that when a wicked man dies, he is not annihilated, but his spirit returns to the 'ocean of Deity,' whence it was given, and his body returns to the dust; they deny the doctrine of a future resurrection, believing that when a man becomes religious, it is his resurrection from the dead, and that after death, he passes immediately to a happy state of existence. Mr Sarjent has been a preacher in this part of the country for thirty years; he is poor and violently persecuted by the Presbyterians: he says that when they found they could not destroy his church by preaching to them, which he gives them liberty to do whenever he is absent, they then attacked his private character. He again and again requested me to express his warmest sentiments of gratitude and affection to you; he says his religious views have been altered and improved since his correspondence with Unitarians in the East. He informed me that there were three other churches or preachers of the same denomination, viz: Matthias Croy, Gallia county, Ohio, Evan Miles, Jefferson county, Indiana, and Aylette Rains, Crawford county, Indiana. They style themselves, 'The Free Church;' they are distinct from the Christians."

"Maysville, on the Kentucky side, is 17 miles from West Union. The gentleman to whom I had a letter, was absent. I learnt that the place contained respectable Methodist, Baptist, and Episcopal churches.—From Maysville I took the road to Paris, in Bourbon county, (Kentucky,) where I visited the venerable Mr Eastin. From him I expected more information than from any other source in the West, but was disappointed. I found him confined to his bed, and, he thought, near his grave. He has a Unitarian church near Paris, consisting of about 35 members, who are mostly old men; he also visits another society on Kane Ridge, of 10 members. He is the same Eastin, whose letters are published in the third volume of the Unitarian Miscellany.—By his advice I went the next morning to Georgetown, the shire town of Scott county. I there saw Mr Stone, who may be con-

sidered the head of the Christians,* throughout this and the Western States, both as a writer and a preacher. He informed me, that Mr Badger visited him last winter, for the purpose of ascertaining the state of the Christian church; that during his stay, an assembly of the elders was called, and the number of churches, preachers, and church members, was committed to writing, and given to him, as official information to lay before the public; this he has done in the Gospel Luminary, published at West Bloomfield, (New York,) Vol. ii. No. 4. I have seen three numbers of this work, which contain minute information, and as far as my observation has extended, it is correct. In addition to what you may learn from these, Mr Stone is desirous to open a communication between Unitarians in the East and West. I gave him duplicates of all the tracts of the Association, which he said he would present in turn to all the elders in his vicinity. Mr Stone farther states, that they approve of the Christian Disciple, a few copies of which are in circulation among them. They are about publishing a periodical work at Cincinnati; Mr Stone is appointed editor. They have published a new edition of Mr Worcester's writings. Mr Stone is regarded as a worthy and pious man; once rich, but he has emancipated his slaves at the expense of the luxuries of life, though he still possesses a competency. He states that the Christians are opposed to slavery, which renders them unpopular with many. The preachers among them have freed their slaves. There are several professional men among the Christians in this State.—While with Mr Stone, I attended a union, monthly prayer meeting, of the Christians, Methodists, and Baptists. They maintained perfect order. There was neither shouting, groaning nor screaming; the one that prayed last, invited some one to succeed him: the house was full, and the audience, to the number, probably, of 300, were respectable, serious and attentive; the house belonged to the Christians, and is situated in the centre of George-

* It will be understood that Mr Thomas uses this word in this and similar places to designate a denomination of believers, who refuse to be called by any other name. See pages 14 and 15 of the Report.

town.—What I have seen of Kentucky, and the information I have gained from Mr Stone, have convinced me, that it would be of little importance to spend any more time in this State. I shall therefore go from this place by way of Lexington and Frankfort, to Cincinnati, and thence to Louisville.—In this State, Tennessee, and Alabama, I should judge, that Presbyterianism is on the decline. The people say they will not endure priestriding, as they here term the Presbyterian church government. Mr Stone remarked, that were he to name the different denominations in these three States according to their numbers, he should place the Methodists first, the Baptists and Christians next, then the Presbyterians, Episcopalians and Catholics. Sunday Schools are common in this State among all denominations."

"On Sunday, June 4th, I attended the Episcopal church in Lexington. The congregation I should estimate at 300. It was communion day; 23 persons approached the altar, among whom were four males. The following account of the churches in Lexington is copied from information furnished me by a gentleman who resides in the place. 1. Roman, Holy Cross, small, service once a month. 2. Episcopal, Christ Church, large, highly respectable, intelligent, the house in good taste, an organ, the minister a graduate of Dartmouth, pews taxed. 3. Presbyterians, 1st, large, many families from the country, respectable, minister not academically educated, pew taxes. 4. Presbyterian, 2nd, not very large, respectable, minister a graduate of Princeton, pew taxes. 5. Presbyterian, 3d, formerly of the Associate Reformed, now independent, very small, minister old and infirm, worship seldom. 6. Baptist, large, not many educated people, minister has the degree of D. D. seats free. 7. Methodists, very large, tolerant, amiable and pious, seats free. 8. Independent Methodist, not very large, liberal, amiable, devout, the minister a physician, also philanthropic and useful, seats free. 9. African church, house small, negroes many, devoted to noise and ignorance."

On his arrival at Frankfort, Mr Thomas was suddenly and violently seized with fever; but by immediate use of remedies, overcame the disorder, and continued his journey.

"The only village on the road from Frankfort (Kentucky) to Cincinnati, (Ohio) a distance of 100 miles, is Williamstown; it contains between 1 and 200 inhabitants, and a Methodist and a Baptist meeting-house, both log buildings. The meetings were well attended in the morning, but the object seemed to be to bring together people for the sports of the afternoon. I did not witness a horse-race or cock-fight, but I was told that they were not uncommon in that place on the Sabbath. I could hear of no Christians in the neighborhood.—In Cincinnati I spent three days. I found here many Unitarians, among whom are three of the most influential men in the city. I shall pass through Cincinnati on my return from the West, and shall then ascertain the numbers and strength of the different sects in the place."

From Cincinnati to Louisville, in Kentucky, 130 miles, Mr Thomas, learning that there were no villages on the road, that would compensate him for the delay of visiting them, passed down the river in the steamboat. Of the latter place he writes,

"I attended in the morning the Episcopal church. It is a fine building, and was filled with the most *fashionable* people in Louisville. The congregation may have been 200. They have but one service in the day, as it is not fashionable to attend church in the afternoon. There is a respectable Presbyterian church and society, but their minister was absent. At noon I attended two Sunday schools, one at the Presbyterian, and the other at the Methodist church. In the two schools there were nearly 200 pupils. All, of every denomination, send their children to these two schools. The exercises consisted in learning to read, and in reading and reciting hymns and portions of scripture. In the afternoon I attended the Methodist church, where the preacher exerted the utmost power of his lungs to an audience of less than 200 persons. There is one Baptist church of good standing, and a Catholic church, attended by a regular priest once a month. There are also two African churches, with preachers suited to the understanding of the slaves. In the county are several meeting-houses, for the Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists, indiscriminately. They

were extremely anxious here, as well as at all the large towns I have visited, that a Unitarian preacher should visit them."

From Louisville Mr Thomas entered the State of Indiana and passed through Loyd, Harrison, and Crawford counties. His journal here furnishes the following extracts.

"On my way from the neighborhood of Fredonia to Paoli, I called on brother David Stewart, one of the elders in the Christian church. He received me with great joy, and gave me the numbers of the churches in his vicinity. He stated that there were three churches in Crawford county, including 150 members; three in Orange county, including 200 members; three in Washington county, including 300 members; four in Harrison county; four in Monroe county, including 500 members. He remarked in the course of our conversation, that he had often mentioned the subject of instituting a correspondence as a body with their Unitarian brethren in the East. From his house, I went to Paoli, the shire town of Orange county, containing 50 or 60 houses. I found a few Quakers, Baptists, and Presbyterians, but no meeting-house other than the court-house.—From Paoli I rode 9 miles to brother Lewis Byram's. He informed me that they had instituted a Sunday school in Paoli, where the children of parents of all denominations attend to the number of 100 and upwards. He is the principal of the school. They are also erecting a building in Paoli which they call the Seminary; of this he is overseer and principal; he is also chairman of the Committee of Correspondence between the Conference, of which he is a member, and others of the same, and neighboring States. —I left brother Byram's, and rode to Hindostan, the shire town of Martin county, containing about 63 inhabitants, exclusive of one negro.—Friday, 23d, I breakfasted in Washington, the shire town of Daviess county. I made no acquaintances in the place; but learnt from general inquiry, that it contained between 2 and 300 inhabitants, and that Sunday schools were attended by men and women, as well as children, for the purpose of learning to read and write. There are two small meeting-

houses in Washington.—At night, I arrived at Vincennes, Knox county, containing 1500 inhabitants; of these the Catholics number near 700 souls, and 300 voters. They are erecting a splendid church, and the only one in the place. Their funds are procured from the Catholics at New Orleans, Baltimore, Cincinnati, &c. There are a few churches in the county near Vincennes, and a Presbyterian minister resides in the town. The inhabitants are mostly foreigners.—After leaving Vincennes, I called on brother Wasson, who resides 15 miles south of Princeton, Gibson county. He informed me, that there were four churches within six miles of him, containing 300 members. I left with him, as with all the elders I have visited, a copy of each of our tracts.—June 26th, I breakfasted at Harmony. There are here about 900 souls. They make no pretensions to religion, having metamorphosed a fine large church into a work-shop. I might fill two or three sheets on the subject of the Harmony community; but as it does not come within my province, I shall only add, that Sunday is a holiday; they have two public balls a week, one every Tuesday, and one every Saturday night; that the men played ball all yesterday afternoon; that their corn-fields and vineyards are overrun with weeds; that many of the leaders among them are foreigners; that a number have left them; and that Mr Owen has departed from his original plan, having established three separate communities with clashing interests, viz. agricultural, mechanical, and literary, and having sold much of the property to individuals. I find there are many of the Christian brethren between this place and St Louis. I shall visit those that fall in my way."

The next letter, received from Mr Thomas, was of a much later date than that from which the above passages are copied, and was written as he was returning from the West. His journal is thus continued:

"Since my last communication, I have been, much of my time, in almost a wilderness country, little calculated to afford important religious information. Such observations respecting the worship, character, and rank in society of different sects, as I have been able to make, during a rapid

progress through a country where the name Unitarian is hardly known, I will now communicate. The information I have gained, has been from an acquaintance with preachers, and religious societies, of different denominations, both from their public exercises, and from private intercourse; also, from gentlemen of intelligence, to whom I had introductory letters, and who have furnished me with necessary information, unattainable by personal observation, during my short visits.—I crossed the Wabash, six miles below Harmony, and took the most direct route to St Louis. I passed through the shire towns of White, Hamilton, and Jefferson counties, and the towns Carlyle and Washington, in Washington county, and Lebanon and Illinois, in St Clair county, State of Illinois. These are the only towns I passed in travelling 160 or 170 miles, on one of the most public roads, and I may almost say, the only road, through the southern and middle parts of Illinois. The country is low and level, the water seldom good, and the streams of a sluggish, green, and unhealthy appearance. The land is mostly prairies, with a few cabins built on their borders. Under these circumstances, the towns are, of course, small, and increase slowly. Those I have named, number from 40 to 100 souls. (When I mention the population of a town, I include only those who live on the town lots, as they are here termed, and not the inhabitants of the whole township.) The people are so few, and so scattered, and eminent preachers so seldom among them, that, to a considerable degree, they neglect the assembling of themselves together, either for public worship, or the organization of churches. In some of the towns, are no places for public worship; in some, camp grounds with booths; in some, court-houses; and in a few, a small meeting-house, for all denominations, indiscriminately. For these reasons, I found it impossible to form a correct estimate of the proportionate numbers of the different denominations. I learnt, that there were several societies of the Cumberland Presbyterians, a new sect, which sprang from the General Assembly Presbyterians. They were rejected by the Synod, because they sent out preachers, whom they believed to be 'gifted in teaching,' but who had not received an education and li-

cense, such as are required by the rules of the Synod. The qualifications of teachers, and the doctrine of decrees, are the only material points in which they differ from the General Assembly Presbyterians. In their creeds, they omit those articles which express a belief in the doctrine of decrees, and substitute sentiments similar to those of the Methodists. The Methodist circuit riders are doing much for the cause of religion, in every part of the West. They carry their religion, as it were, to every man's door. I meet their preachers in almost every part of the country. The following facts will give additional weight to an opinion I expressed in a previous letter, that the General Assembly Presbyterians are on the decline in the South and West. The Christian body, of which there are 15 or 20,000 members, west of the mountains, originated from the Presbyterians, and are strictly Unitarian in their opinions of the Father and the Son. The Cumberland Presbyterians, who are numerous in Illinois and Missouri, also separated from the Presbyterians. Trinitarian missionaries, from the East, I have heard of, but have never met with any. They are unpopular and unsuccessful in this section of the country ; perhaps, more so, than any other class of preachers. This may, in part, be imputed to the eastern custom of reading sermons. In many places, the majority of a western audience seem to consider a written discourse as an acknowledgment of incapacity to give oral instructions, and withdraw their attention at the sight of a preacher's notes, as though he were incapable of preaching the gospel. The state of society in a new country requires a different kind of preaching. They must have excitement. In the parts of Illinois under consideration, the inhabitants are emigrants from different parts, unacquainted, and living at a distance from each other, with little neighborly intercourse. Thus situated, they lose much of that laudable pride and emulation, which are necessary to the good appearance of their persons, houses, and farms, and, at the same time, they, in a great degree, lose their religion. Missionaries here, might be useful to a few, but there are other parts of this and other States, in which their sphere of usefulness might be much more extensive."

"July 2d, I arrived at St Louis, Missouri, which, according to Col. Strother, and others, has a population of 6 or 7000. From the appearance of the place, I should estimate the population at 4 or 5000. The Catholics have a large society. Their meeting-house is large, but unfinished; their priest a man of education and talents. They have two services on the Sabbath: the morning sermon in French, the afternoon sermon in English. There are, also, a Presbyterian, and a Methodist society, each of which has a convenient house for public worship. I attended the Catholic church in the morning, intending to go to the Presbyterian meeting in the afternoon, and to the Methodist in the evening. The Presbyterian afternoon service was omitted, on account of a funeral, and the Methodists had no evening meeting. Mr S. remarked that it was his opinion, that a good Unitarian preacher might soon attach to himself a large society of the most respectable citizens in the place. St Louis surpasses all places I have visited, unless it be Louisville, in fashion, and high notions of life; great liberality, (and I may almost say licentiousness) of opinion on religious subjects, prevails among them. Many of this class of people do not support Presbyterian preachers, because they do not agree with them in principles, nor are they willing to submit to a synod in matters of religion; they do not support the Catholics, because they do not believe in their ceremonies; and those of other denominations are seldom men of education. Should a Unitarian preacher visit St Louis, I think he might obtain a liberal support; but the manners and habits of the people are such, that, should he, in his zeal, hold his meetings in the market, or under the shade of a tree, he would fail of doing that good, which I think a missionary might do, were he to visit St Louis and St Charles under favorable circumstances.—July 4th, in the evening, I rode to St Charles, distant from St Louis 20 miles. Six miles this side of St Charles, I was overtaken by a violent storm; the night set in extremely dark, the rain fell in torrents, the wind rose, the dry trees fell crashing around me; the road I knew not—the last three miles of the way were through bottom lands, frequently overflowed

from the Missouri, the mud knee deep, and the timber so thick that the road was invisible. Under these circumstances, I arrived at the ferry at 10 o'clock. The ferryman refused to carry me across till morning, but gave me leave to trade with his slaves, provided I ran my own risk. The wind was very high, we missed the landing, and I got out in water two or three feet deep, and led my horse ashore. St Charles contains about 1000 inhabitants. There were no meeting-houses in the place, though they usually have preaching of some kind. I spent the next day with Governor Miller, who received me with great politeness and hospitality; but St Charles not being his permanent place of residence, he could afford me no farther account of the religious affairs of the town, than that there was the usual variety of sentiment common in places settled by emigrants from different parts, and that they have not, as yet, regular established preachers, or churches. In this state of things, I think a missionary would be well employed, were he to divide his time between these two places."

Mr Thomas was advised to follow his own judgment in respect to the route, which he should pursue, both going and returning. Of his journey homeward, he says,

"As I returned from Indiana, I visited some of the western counties of Ohio, which together with those I had previously visited in the eastern and southern parts of the State, I deemed sufficient to give a correct idea of the general state of religion in Ohio. And as little can be done except in large towns, I concluded that a rapid progress through the centre of the state would occupy all the time I could profitably spend in the West. I therefore, by the advice of those in Cincinnati, whom I had consulted in forming my route westward, sold my horse at Lexington, and proceeded on a direct course through Cincinnati and Columbus to Cleveland.

"Having recruited a little at St Louis and St Charles I commenced my homeward route, somewhat disheartened at the dreary extent of prarie and forest between me and Cincinnati. I crossed the Mississippi a few miles above the mouth of the Missouri. Just before I came to the bank of the Mississippi, the nearness of which was concealed by a

forest, a muddy creek crossed my path, to appearance not more than 3 feet deep. I tried my horse at three places but he refused to go. I thought him obstinate and struck him severely, when to my utter astonishment I found him swimming under me. The opposite bank was so steep I had to swim him some distance before he could effect a landing. On my arrival at the ferry, I learnt that I had crossed a creek of back water from the Mississippi, then so high as to conceal the bridge. My papers I saved by drying them with care. After crossing the river, I passed through Alton and Milton in Madison county, Illinois, both inconsiderable villages, with occasional preaching from the Methodist circuit riders and the Presbyterian missionaries. They have a population of from 50 to a 100 souls.—On the same day I arrived at Edwardsville the county town of Madison county. It contains nearly 300 inhabitants. There is a society of General Assembly Presbyterians, also of Cumberland Presbyterians, and a few Baptists. The preacher of the Cumberland Presbyterians is a farmer, and resides in a log cabin near the village; I called at his house, or cabin, and was kindly received. There are a few scattered Christians in the township, but I did not see any of them. Gov. Coles, the only person in the town to whom I had letters, was absent; so that I had no letters to deliver between Edwardsville and Terre Haute.—Friday, 7th July, I stopped at Greenville, the seat of justice in Bond county; it is much smaller than Edwardsville. It has a small meeting-house for the accommodation of any that will use it.—On the 8th I stopped at Vandalia, the seat of government in Illinois. It formerly had a population of 6 or 700, its present population is about 200. On Sunday I expected to attend the different churches at Vandalia, but on inquiry I found there was but one meeting in town on that day; and that was called by a Methodist visitor. The Presbyterians occupy the state house, a small two story brick building, whenever they have a preacher. In the evening I left Vandalia and followed a southeast course so as to meet the road leading from Vincennes to St Louis; otherwise I should have been obliged to lie out two nights on the grand prarie.—I pass-

ed through Lawrenceville, the seat of justice for Lawrence county. It is a small village and has neither meeting houses nor preachers, except occasional visitors or some of the gifted brethren. It has a population of 50 or 60 souls. The same day I arrived at Ellison Prairie, opposite Vincennes, on the west bank of the Wabash. This prairie is 10 or 12 miles in extent, and is settled almost exclusively by Christians. It is generally known by the name of "The Christian Settlement." There are nearly 200 in the settlement, and it is by far the largest and best 'improvement' I have seen in Illinois. This is saying much in their favor, though not more than their industry, good order, and christian charity justly claim. The superiority of their settlement does not consist in fine houses, for, like most others in the State, their dwellings are built of logs; their grounds are well enclosed and cultivated, their gardens neat though plain, and their good habits, manners, and morals proverbial, notwithstanding the strong prejudices of sectarianism. Near this settlement is the residence of William Kinkade, a man of classical education and one of the leading elders of the society. He spends his time in preaching when able to ride, and in keeping school when his health is too infirm to admit of his travelling. I did not see him, for he was quite unwell when I was at the settlement, so much so that he was confined to his bed; besides, I had passed his house 12 miles before I knew where he lived. After leaving Ellison Prairie I crossed the Wabash, and entered Indiana at Vincennes."

"July 12th, I left Vincennes for Terre Haute, distant 60 miles. On my way thither, I passed through a village of Shakers, situated on the Wabash, 12 miles north of Vincennes. The village is remarkable for that neatness and simplicity, which are so eminently characteristics of the Shakers. The society consists of nearly 100 members; they are here, as well as in other places, accused by the "world's people" of secret meetings for immoral purposes; it yet remains with the accusers to prove the charge. —In the evening, I arrived at Miriam, on the Wabash, and the seat of justice for Sullivan county. The village contains 15 or 20 families.—Terre Haute, the shire

town of Vigo county, is also on the Wabash. It has a population of about 300; one Presbyterian, and one Methodist society; also a few Baptists and Christians, though not sufficiently numerous, in the immediate neighborhood of the village, to support regular preaching. The Methodists have a house for public worship, and preaching as often as their minister performs his circuit. The Presbyterians occupy the court-house. A few miles southwest from the town, on the Illinois side of the river, is the residence of two eminent preachers in the Christian church, David McGahey, and Henry A. Palmer. I should have visited them, had they not been absent on a preaching tour.—Having learnt that the first 30 miles of my way towards Indianopolis, the seat of government, was through a thick forest, without a single habitation, and no road other than a bridle way, which was often concealed by thickets, I began to make some inquiries what course to pursue, when fortunately I met with a man who had lately passed through the same forest, and was now ready to return. We provided provender for our horses, and set forward on our journey. During the twilight, we crossed the ford at Eel river, and soon arrived at Bowling Green, the shire town of Clay county. This county was lately set off, and the shire town consists of three log cabins, in one of which I spent the night. The area in which these cabins are built, and on which the trees have been felled and burnt, contains 3 acres, and is surrounded on every side by the primitive forest.—The next day I rode to Spencer, the seat of justice for Owen county, in hopes of attending meeting; but on my arrival, I learnt that there was no meeting in the place, though the Methodists sometimes have preaching. The village contains 60 or 70 inhabitants; it is situated on the bank of White river, which is generally thought sufficient to support steamboat navigation, during the spring months, as high up as Indianopolis; it is of course increasing fast.—Bloomington, the shire town of Monroe county, where I next stopped, has a population of more than 300, a Presbyterian, a Methodist, and a Christian society. In the skirts of the village are two camp grounds with booths for public worship. The

Christians in Bloomington and its vicinity constitute a numerous and respectable part of the community. I called on brother Henderson, a Christian preacher, and was received with joy when I made known the object of my visit. He and his family had just returned from a communion meeting, which continued through Saturday and Sunday. He said they had a happy meeting, that five had professed religion, and that perfect order and christian conduct prevailed throughout the meeting. He also informed me that there were five churches in the vicinity, consisting of from 50 to 100 members each. He was pleased to hear of the progress of " that christian liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," in the Eastern States, and was desirous to establish christian fellowship, by correspondence and cooperation. There is one classically educated preacher in this neighborhood, who belongs to the Christian church.—In the evening, I continued my journey towards Indianopolis, where I arrived on the night of the 18th, having passed through Martinsville, the shire town of Morgan county, containing about 30 or 40 inhabitants, without meeting-house or minister. I called on brother Morris, a lawyer, and a preacher in the Christian church. He informed me that there were two churches of his denomination near to him, one on Eagle creek, the other just north of the town. (You will recollect, when only two or three churches are mentioned in a county, that, in this part of Indiana, it is not unfrequently the case, that the village at the county seat constitutes the only one in the county; and that the other 'improvements,' of which there are but few, are generally scattered along some fertilizing stream, at such a distance from each other, as to render weekly meetings impracticable.) There are three organized churches in addition to these: the Presbyterian, consisting of about 30 members; the Baptist, of nearly the same number; and the Methodist, of nearly 100. I was introduced to a gentleman, formerly of Boston, who informed me that Indianopolis was healthy, with the exception of the intermittent fever in the fall season; this however, is probably owing to the newness of the place, and the surrounding woods, as there are but

about six acres from which the primitive forests have been cleared away. In addition to this, the surrounding country is remarkably level; and White river, on which the town is built, is of course a sluggish stream. The present population is about 800; as the seat of government is now permanently established in this place, its increase will probably be rapid. Religious sects are here so divided, that a man's religious tenets cannot render him very unpopular, as neither sect is more numerous than all the others; for this reason, there is more freedom of inquiry, and less persecution, than usually prevails where one denomination outnumbers all the others. —July 20th, I left Indianopolis for Rushville, distant 40 miles. I started early in the morning, and rode diligently all day, and at night I had travelled but 20 miles. The road lay through a thick forest, and the mud was so deep, and the bridges such, that I was obliged to make my way among thickets, swamps, and fallen trees, at the expense of having my clothes literally torn from me. I crossed the ford at Blue river, along which there are several settlements. I here called on brother Frazier, who visits two churches in his vicinity. He said there was a Baptist church of 60 or 70 members near by, the minister of which often attended the Christian church, and assisted him in its duties; and that the Baptists, though most of them held to close communion, had not as yet found fault with him. He thought there was a prospect of a union of their societies. This is the effect of charity, brotherly love, and good works among the Christians. Having repaired, as well as I could, the defects which my ride had occasioned in my wardrobe, I proceeded to Rushville, the seat of justice for Rush county; it has nearly 100 inhabitants, with no meeting-house, other than the court-house.—Continuing my route homewards, I passed through Connersville, the shire town of Fayette county; it contains 300 inhabitants, and three churches, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist. As I wished to be at Paris on Sunday, I stopped here but a short time, and of course learnt little else than what I have mentioned. The same day I passed through Centreville, the county seat of Wayne. Here also I staid but a few

minutes, and in the evening proceeded to Richmond, where I spent the night. Centreville is about as large as Connersville; a large part of the inhabitants are Quakers. Richmond has a population of 600, of which one half are Quakers. There is a Baptist and a Methodist society, also a congregation of Africans; they were drawn thither by the Quakers, who afford every assistance in their power both to runaway slaves and free blacks. The Quakers are Unitarian in most of their opinions, and charitable towards all denominations."

"Sunday, 23d, I rode out 7 miles, to Paris, a small village, in Preble county, Ohio, where the Christians are very numerous. I breakfasted with Elder Purviance, joined them in their family devotions, (a duty, the omission of which, in a Christian family, I have not known, in a single instance,) and then repaired to church. The church a convenient building, situated near a spring, which to them is a matter of no small importance, as in the warm season they assemble early, and stay till night. The congregation consisted of perhaps more than 250 persons: they conducted themselves in as orderly a manner during the services, and the day, as any class of christians in the world. There was no illaudable enthusiasm, either in the preacher or hearers. I was solicited to take a part in the exercises, which I declined, as there were two ministers present, one of whom preached in the forenoon, and the other in the afternoon. Elder Purviance preached to them from John xxi. 15, 16, 17. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me, &c." The object of his discourse seemed to be to impress his hearers with the importance of showing their love to their master, by leading peaceable and holy lives; by ministering in good works and kind offices to each other, to the disciples of their common Lord, of whatever denomination, and to the world at large. Though he spoke in a rude and simple style, I have seldom heard a more affectionate exhortation to lead righteous and sober lives, and to live peaceably with all men. In the afternoon services, a portion of time was allowed to an African. The circumstances were these: he had formerly been a slave to one who is now a preacher in the society; he had run away and not been

heard of for 30 years; on that morning he returned to his master, having learnt that he had freed his slaves, and said that he was a member of the Methodist church, and had long preached to his brethren in slavery. He solicited an opportunity to address the congregation, after the regular services, which was granted. He was listened to with decorum; his remarks were good, and he appeared sincere. Elder Purviance, whom I have before mentioned, is one of the oldest Christian preachers in the West. He devoted the early part of his life to political affairs, but becoming tired of the wranglings and petty jealousies of a political career, he has since devoted himself to the church. He has literally spent his latter years going about doing good."

Mr Thomas next visited Oxford, Butler county, Ohio, of which he thus speaks:

"Oxford is the seat of Miami University. This institution was chartered in 1809, and a township of land given in fee simple by Congress, which affords them an annual revenue of $4000; in addition to this, it has been particularly patronized by the state legislature. The main edifice and one wing of the building are completed: the plan is such, that the wings may be extended as the institution increases, and still add to the beauty of the structure. The first regular class graduated this fall; there are 100 students. I attended evening prayers in the chapel; the exercises consisted in part, of the recitation of a stated number of texts by individuals called upon at the discretion of the President. The members of the senior class with the exception of four are members of the Presbyterian church: the Presbyterian meeting is also held in the University chapel. There is a meeting-house in the village for the Methodists and Baptists. The site of the town is pleasant and healthy; it is situated on a gentle swell of land, which renders it very pleasant to a traveller in this uncommonly level country. The village has a population of 200 and is fast increasing."

"25th July, I arrived at Cincinnati. This is the largest city west of the mountains, it contains 15,000 inhabitants. The religious denominations are as follows;

Methodists between 8 and 900, Presbyterians 400, Quakers 180; there are also a large Episcopal society, two of Baptists, one of Covenanters, one of Catholics, and one of Christians. The Methodists have two churches, the Presbyterians two, and the others one each. There are many who profess Unitarian principles, and they are among the most respectable people in the city. They are anxious to establish a Unitarian society, and would do much to support one. Had they a church I doubt not that they would support a minister well. A place of such importance is well worth the attention of all who feel interested in the cause of liberal christianity.—I will give you a sketch of the conduct at a prayer meeting in the city, which I happened to attend. One evening as I was walking the streets, I heard screams, as though several people were in distress: I hastened to the place whence the noise came, and found near 100 persons, men, women and children, assembled at a prayer meeting. They prayed and sung alternately. While one was praying, others encouraged him with expressions like these, "O Jesus! how good he prays!" "A'nt that right good, Lord!" "I can conquer a thousand!" "Yes," says another, "and leap over a wall!" And in short, some burst into laughter, others into crying, some hurra'd, and others groaned. Deafened and confused with their clamor, and shocked at their *worship*, I soon left them."

Mr Thomas on his return fulfilled a promise given to Mr Stone, that he would visit him again, on his way from the West. Of this visit and of his journey through Ohio towards New England he thus writes.

"On Monday I set out for Georgetown to visit Mr Stone, where I arrived August 2d. He told me he had consulted several of his brethren, and they had concluded that it was not expedient for them to procure the publications of the Association to a large amount at present, as they had lately made considerable exertions to republish Worcester's Bible News, and to establish a paper devoted to the Christian interest. He also said they had done much to support missionaries in the upper parts of Illinois and Indiana, and in Tennessee, Alabama and Mis-

sissippi. They also wish their brethren in general to learn, that although we have taken what may seem the name of a party instead of the simple name Christians, we have not set ourselves up as holy to the exclusion of all who differ from us in opinion. He added, that it was from sectarian quarrels, and the unholy feelings that attend them, that they had been forced to separate themselves from all sectarians, and assume the primitive name of Christians. At the time of my visit he was about starting on a preaching tour to Tennessee and Alabama. I took leave of this happy, this good man, sincerely regretting that my personal acquaintance with so kind and hospitable a family was probably at an end."

"Having, as I returned from Indiana, visited some of the western counties of Ohio, and having previously visited the eastern and southern counties, I concluded that a rapid progress through the centre of the State would occupy all the time I could profitably spend in the West. I therefore sold my horse in Lexington, and proceeded by public conveyances to Dayton, the first important place on the nothern route from Cincinnati to the Lakes. Dayton is a large township, containing about 3600 inhabitants. The town is situated on the Great Miami, and has several convenient buildings for public worship. There is a society of Christians a mile from the village. In this town, as throughout this State, the habits and morals of the people are more like those of New England than in any of the neighboring States; better attention is paid to the sabbath and to public worship. Games and sports, which are prevalent in many places on the sabbath, are here prohibited; the shops are closed, and all unnecessary business is suspended. The religious opinions of the people are generally those of the State from which they emigrated; there are therefore many different denominations. The Methodists are the most numerous, and the Presbyterians next.—After leaving Dayton I passed through several small villages, and on Saturday night, August 12th, arrived at Columbus the seat of government of Ohio, where I spent the sabbath. Columbus contains 1400 inhabitants. The Methodists are very numerous; in the town and county they number

1300; the enthusiasm and vehemence displayed in their devotions, exceed description. On Sunday night as I lay in my bed at the distance of half a mile, I could hear them distinctly. The Presbyterian society have a congregation of 300. Their minister is a man of talents and education; their church is a one story wooden building, which is soon to give place to a new one. There is also a Lutheran church and society, and a few Baptists. The Christians are few and unorganized. I was much pleased with the quiet and good order which prevailed on the sabbath; it seemed like home.—Monday noon brought me to Mount Vernon the seat of justice for Knox county. It has a population of 400: there is a respectable Presbyterian church and society: there is also a society of Christians under the care of Judge Smith, they are increasing fast; I spent the evening with him, during which he exhibited a strong interest in whatever related to our proceedings, and wished that epistolary intercourse might ensue.—On Wednesday I reached Ravenna, where I had business of a pecuniary nature. After one day's delay I proceeded to Cleveland on Lake Erie, where I arrived on Friday.—Having learned that I should be obliged to tarry several days or proceed immediately, and having ascertained from inquiries of my host, and of gentlemen who were present, that the place was important, only from its local situation, I embarked in the night, and proceeded by the most direct course for Massachusetts, where I arrived September 9th, having been absent five months; during which time I passed through twelve States, visited fifteen counties in Pennsylvania, twentyfive in Ohio, twelve in Kentucky, twentytwo in Indiana, twelve in Illinois, and two in Missouri, and travelled between four and five thousand miles, and one half of the distance on horseback."

In the abstract of Intelligence, furnished by Mr Thomas after his return, there was much necessary repetition, and many remarks were made, which were meant only for the perusal of the Committee. In these private details they possess information which will guide and assist them, if at any future time they should wish to extend their operations into the Western States. It may be agreeable to the readers of the previous narrative, to see the following extracts, which, it is thought, may with propriety be published.

"In a previous correspondence, it was my object to communicate information respecting all denominations of christians in that section of the country, which was the scene of my inquiries. I shall now confine my remarks to those places which afford the widest field for exertion, and promise most success to the friends of liberal christianity, and to those engaged in the great work of salvation.

"In a country like Ohio and the States west of it, where a new population is thinly scattered over a wide extent of territory, where from the rapid increase of population villages spring up as it were while men sleep, where too, in many instances, there are no settled ministers, it would seem that missionary exertions might be extremely useful, and their usefulness increase in proportion to the influx of population; but this plan of spreading religious knowledge, viewed in connexion with the present state of liberal christianity, and the manner in which its teachers are educated, is liable to objections which would render it less useful, than that of forming establishments in large towns and cities. Those, who are pioneers in settling a new country, are not unfrequently more engaged in beginning the world anew, than in preparing to leave it. They are generally of that class, among whom anything new must force its way in opposition to prejudice and bigotry, made doubly strong through the absence of those views and feelings which are consequent only to education and good learning. They have not among them that society, which would serve to animate the exertions and encourage the labors of good ministers, who

alone can be efficient as missionaries; neither will such men forego the benefits of that society, which will properly appreciate their talents and render them doubly useful in their day and generation, for situations in which their sphere of usefulness would be so limited, and many of their most valuable acquirements in a manner useless. Such places must be left to a class of preachers *sui generis*, who can create that kind of excitement, and make those appeals to the feelings, necessary to produce effect, which men of cultivated minds and improved tastes cannot do; for with such it must be affected, insincere, and of course ineffectual.

"On the other hand, able men will be willing to go into large towns or cities where there will be a suitable field for the exertion of all their talents; where there are ample means of obtaining a support; where they will be able to spread religious knowledge through the medium of the press, as well as from the pulpit and where they will be in situations to continue those religious instructions and exhortations, which are necessary to secure the good fruits of christianity.

"With these views I shall confine my remarks to those towns and cities, in which I have reason to think the establishment of Unitarian preachers would be most useful to the cause of religion.

"*Harrisburg*, (Penn.) is the seat of government, and has a population of 3000. At the time of my visit the society of Unitarians was small, compared with churches in this vicinity. It was increasing as rapidly as could be expected under the circumstances of its situation. A few tracts had been procured, and had carried conviction to the minds of many. Harrisburg is an important place, not only as the capital of the state, but in its location and population. During the session of the legislature, many of the members attend the meetings of the Unitarian society, as often as they have preaching. The society is composed of the most respectable class of the inhabitants. I know of no reason why assistance would not be profitably afforded to them.

"In *Northumberland* and its vicinity, Mr Kay has

opened a wide field for missionary labors, and can, only at long intervals, visit all the places where he is requested to preach.

"*Pittsburg*, (Penn.) is a large and flourishing city. The Unitarians here have a convenient meeting house, a handsome brick building, situated nearly in the centre of the city. They are, however, in debt for the building, and are obliged to pay a ground rent of $100 a year. Their present preacher was formerly a methodist minister; he was excommunicated for his religious views; he preaches extempore, and is not a regular pastor, neither does he make preaching his profession. They are desirous to obtain a pastor. There is reason to suppose a large society might be collected, and much good done by an able preacher. Their former minister used to gain a partial support by teaching a school. The situation is important and the number and character of the inhabitants, collected from all parts of the world, show that preaching is here necessary, if anywhere. The condition of this society calls loudly for the attention of those who have to spare. It must also be considered, that they have no neighboring minister, occasionally to give them sermons.

"*Steubenville*, (Ohio) is the next place that I shall mention as favorable for missionary exertions. It is situated immediately on the bank of the Ohio, at the distance of 30 miles from Pittsburg, and in the midst of a fruitful, healthy, and thickly settled country. Here is a society of Unitarian Christians. In the town and county, there are many Friends, who are, generally, favorable to Unitarian views of christianity. Several of the leading men in the place are from New England, and are desirous of forming a society. Steubenville is so near Pittsburg, that they might be associated, and I doubt not that between the two places they would support a missionary. At almost all seasons of the year, boats are passing continually from one place to the other, so that the expense of time and money would be inconsiderable. I am confident, that a zealous and devoted man might build up and increase a church in both these places. Steubenville has several manufacturing establishments, two or

three banks, an academy, and a printing office. Under these circumstances, I should think no one who has entered the profession with right motives, and who is not elsewhere engaged in the ministry, would hesitate to go, and labor where the harvest is indeed great, but the laborers few.

"*Marietta*, (Ohio) is also situated on the Ohio, over 100 miles from Steubenville. It was one of the first settlements made in the State. It is laid out in fine taste, and is adorned with many elegant buildings, both public and private. A paper is here printed; there is also an academy. A large number of the inhabitants do not attend the Presbyterian or the Methodist church, and are called Universalists, though they seldom have preaching of any kind. Among the reasons for anticipating success to a Unitarian preacher in Marietta, may be considered the manner in which religion is there supported. The Ohio Company Grant, including Washington, Morgan, Meigs, Gallia, and one or two other counties, was given or granted on the condition, that one out of a particular number of districts should be rented land for the support of religion. Marietta is a rented district; the inhabitants are obliged to pay a stated rent in support of religion. Thus each sect gets all the signers it can, and draws money in proportion to its numbers. I was told that the Universalists were the most numerous and drew the largest share of money; but instead of procuring a preacher, they have appropriated it to the purchase of a library. This shows that they are not anxious to build up the Universalist faith. I think many of them would give their support to a Unitarian minister. There are likewise many who are Unitarians at heart. Though Marietta is not now rapidly increasing, it is so situated that it cannot fail to become a large place. It is situated not only on the Ohio, but also on the Muskingum. This river is navigable 100 miles for batteaux, and nearly 200 for small boats, and from the head of boat navigation, with one mile of portage, there is water communication by Cuyahoga river with lake Erie. The Muskingum is 250 yards wide at its entrance into the Ohio, and runs through the middle of the town.

"*Paris*, (Kentucky.) Mr Eastin has here a small society. He is an old man, and is fast hastening to the reward of his labors. When the shepherd shall be smitten, I fear the flock will be scattered. He is a professed Unitarian, and has long been engaged in the ministry. When he heard and witnessed the efforts of his christian brethren in the cause of truth, a gleam of joy spread over his countenance, and seemed to invigorate his frame, already exhausted by confinement and sickness. Paris is distant about 17 miles from Lexington.

"*Lexington* and *Louisville*, (Kentucky.) In Lexington, I should think Unitarian efforts would avail but little. In Louisville, several respectable gentlemen were of opinion, that a popular Unitarian preacher might soon establish a good society. The reasons for this opinion, are the character of the present preachers, the number of inhabitants who at present seldom attend any church, and the number of literary men, who entertain liberal views of religion. Louisville is about 70 miles distant from Lexington.

"*St Louis* and *St Charles*, (Missouri.) These towns are situated between 18 and 20 miles apart. At St Louis there are many who do not attend church, because they have not able preachers, nor men of their sentiments. At St Charles, I could not learn that there were any houses built solely for public worship; there is certainly little effectual preaching, though there are many who would properly appreciate, and partially support a missionary.

"*Indianopolis*, (Indiana) is a new place, and has been but a short time the seat of government. There are a few men of liberal sentiments, who would be pleased with a Unitarian preacher. The field for exertion in the ministry at Indianopolis is at present limited. In the eastern part of the State, in Fayette, Franklin, and Wayne counties, are several fine villages, situated near together, where I think a missionary would have full audiences, and might, by continued labors, do much good.

"*Cincinnati*, (Ohio) is by far the most favorable place for the establishment of a Unitarian church of any I visited. There are many professed Unitarians, who are anxious for a minister; and all that is wanting is a pious,

devoted, and able minister, who may be a nucleus around which a society and church may be formed. I know not why a minister should hesitate to make Cincinnati a permanent residence.

"Because I have mentioned the foregoing places as favorable for missionary efforts, I would have no person think that a preacher would immediately step into a fine meeting-house, or into ample means of support, or even into a church already organized; but rather into places, where some have neglected religion because they have heard it represented in a manner repugnant to reason and their consciences, others because they have seen it made a matter of 'experiences,' confessions, and creeds, an austere, exclusive, and gloomy system; into places, where one must labor as becometh a minister of the gospel, and reap the reward of his labors in seeing a church grow up around him. Preachers at first may promise themselves hearers in all these places, but it will depend on their own powers whether they interest and retain them. They may reasonably calculate on a rapid increase of strength and numbers, but their own exertions must effect it, and if they will not devote all their powers to their profession, they ought not to be supported in it. I have spoken of but few places in Ohio, not that these are the only ones of which I could speak favorably, but because I should not know where to stop, should I undertake to single them out. The country lying south from Columbus, between the Muskingum and the Miami, is filled with large, populous, and flourishing villages, so that the whole time I was absent would hardly be sufficient to gain an accurate knowledge of their religious condition.

"*The Christians.* It would be useless to repeat here their religious views and opinions.* As to their religious character, I was never among more practical christians in my life. Family worship I have never known them to

* For a full and accurate account of the Christian Denomination, their history, sentiments and numbers, reference may be had to a letter addressed by Rev. Simon Clough, one of their elders, to the Secretary of the General Baptist Assembly of England, which has been published in this country, in a pamphlet, and may also be found in the Christian Examiner, vol. 4, (for 1827) pp. 183—193.

omit either at night or morning; neither have I ever witnessed over-wrought enthusiasm or extravagance in their public or private services. I often attended their meetings, in different States, and I never witnessed the least disorder or impropriety in any of their meetings. Their preachers, though many of them are of the laboring class of the community, are men of strong minds and good talents; there are also among them many classically educated men. They resemble the Methodists in their mode of sending out preachers, and holding their annual associations. Letters are sent from each conference to the other conferences, and are read at the annual meetings; so that each conference is acquainted with the success of all the others. In one of these letters addressed from "the elders and brethren of the Christian Conference on the Wabash," they say, "it has been determined not to fellowship any person, as a church member or as a preacher, who is in the spirit or practice of slavery." "We feel as much attached to the Bible as a rule of faith and government, as we ever did, and feel determined, God being our helper, to give it precedence of all the books in the world." In this letter they speak of their ministers under three classes—elders, licensed preachers, and exhorters. The Christians are very numerous in Alabama and Tennessee; also in the vicinity of Georgetown (Kentucky.) A large body of them reside on Ellison Prairie, (Illinois;) also at Bloomington and Indianopolis (Indiana;) at Paoli (Indiana) and Paris (Preble county, Ohio.) These places are among the principal settlements, of which I have named but a few. I will close with the single remark, that I was never among any class of christians, who better live up to their profession, than the Western Unitarian Christians."

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RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.

Experience worketh hope, and this hope maketh not ashamed.—Paul.

The subject I purpose to consider in these pages is religious experience. I design to offer some plain remarks on the importance, misapprehensions, characteristics, and methods of experimental religion. A discourse embracing topics such as these, cannot be deemed unworthy the attention of any who profess to be disciples of Jesus Christ; since it will be readily conceded, that the great end of his divine mission was to make men experimentally acquainted with what religion unfolds and enjoins; and since, as every one must acknowledge, there is no point upon which Christians, of whatever denomination, ought to find a higher degree of satisfaction in dwelling, than the practical tendencies of their faith.

I. In asking attention, in the first place, to the *importance* of experimental religion, I begin with expressing the hope that, if, in any mind attached to liberal views of Christianity, unpleasant thoughts are apt to be associated with the topic in consequence of the extremes to which some have been forced in seasons of unusual

excitement, they will not be set to the account of religious experience, properly understood, but to that only of the extravagances which have at times accompanied it. The thing itself, apart from its abuses and viewed in its true light and relations, can appear to none more worthy of deepest concern, than it ought to the class of Christians to which we belong. Indeed, not to attach infinite importance to the religion that is truly experimental, would be inconsistent with our declared, nay, with our most cherished principles. Much as we admire our system of faith, in a speculative regard, we know and we teach, that it must be in vain for us unless we make it a matter of individual, personal experience. Were it not for its power to enlighten, sanctify, and save the soul, we should account it as a useless thing. For this power, unequalled as we think it, we esteem our faith above all price; for this we cling to it as to our life; for this we would not shrink from any sacrifice to uphold it in the world. Indeed, there is not, I am persuaded, nor ever has been, any system, which, alike as to what it denies of the popular creed, as to what it affirms to be of revealed truth, and as to what belongs to it in common with the notices we are compelled to take of human life and divine providence, is so well adapted, as Unitarian Christianity, to commend the importance of the religion that is thoroughly experimental; since, as I sincerely believe, there is, and there has been, none, which so uniformly, so decidedly, and so strongly, as this, asserts its claim and evinces its power, to deepen the sense of individual responsibleness, to enforce the obligation of personal endeavor, and to press home the great truth that no man's hopes ought, in a religious respect, to be better than his experiences.

1. First, can any thing be better suited to this end than

what our system denies of the popular creed? Why, but for the importance we attach to experimental religion, do we deem it worthy of so much effort to be rid of those false grounds of hope, that have for ages prevented the doctrines of Jesus from bearing upon men's consciences with the pressure of unquestionable truth? Why else, for instance, do we plead no hereditary impotency as an excuse for our sins; hold to no transfer of the penalty of our guilt to a substituted victim; trust in no righteousness as imputable to us but our own; cherish no hope of special help from heaven except we try to help ourselves; rely on no faith without works; recognize no condition of salvation but personal holiness; depend on nothing for acceptance with God but our own character and the mercy of our heavenly Father as made known to us by his blessed Son?

2. Again, can any thing more strongly evince the importance of experimental religion, than what our system affirms to be of divine revelation? Why, but for our deep sense of this, do we lay so much stress on those truths of scripture, which are practical; which imply the obligations, suggest the motives, and prescribe the rules of duty; which, in a word, require of us the greatest amount of virtue? Why, for example, do we prize so highly the belief that we were born with pure hearts, but that we may feel ourselves bound to keep the treasure unsullied; the belief that we have the power, moral as well as physical, to do our duty, but that we may not wait for supernatural influence before we set about it; the belief that God's love to his children is free, unmerited, and unbought, but that it may touch our hearts and win us to an affectionate obedience; the belief that Jesus Christ was sent by the Father to save us, by affording

us methods and motives for saving ourselves, but that we may have no reason of apology for not yielding to the one and using the other; the belief that there is the most intimate and enduring connexion between vice and misery, and between virtue and happiness, but that we may dread sin as our worst enemy, and cherish desires of holiness that nothing can quench?

3. Then, too, the notices we are compelled to take of human life and divine providence, at once fall in with these views, and serve to deepen our impression of the importance that belongs to experimental religion. We interpret every thing as a caution against trusting to what are called death-bed experiences. According to our views, the experiment is every day going on that is to decide our future destiny. Its results are unaffected by nothing that happens to us. We are continually growing better or worse. Our character is modified by every step we take, by every thought we think, by every feeling we cherish, by all our movements, speculations, and emotions. Moment presses upon moment, day upon day, and year upon year, but no one of them leaves us as it found us. We propitiate it in the appointed way, and it imparts to us its blessing; we do it despite in our folly, and it marks us with its curse. We use it well as it passes, and it goes to bear witness for us at the bar of God. We stain it with our vice, it leaves us, and we cannot call it back again to take the stain out. The cry of penitence will not revoke the time we have lost. No tears of contrition can change the pollution of guilt into the purity of innocence. Prayer to God even, after we have sinned, though it may obtain all which forgiveness implies, cannot make us as we were before we transgressed. What we experience and what we do is fixed on the

page of truth. The record of our virtues will be as lasting as our memory, and it will not cease to be a satisfaction to us such as angels have. But the leaf in the book of our life that we have purposely blotted we cannot make clean again. The blot must remain to fill us with regrets whenever we look upon it.

With what interest, therefore, should not our experiences seem to us clothed. I cannot find language to express it fully. I must leave it to imagination to conceive what I am unable to describe. If we are to live forever, and if all we deliberately think and feel and do, is to have a bearing on our future condition indefinitely, then, certainly, the subject is one of vast, one of inexpressible importance.

II. But I must venture to caution my readers against some *misapprehensions* that prevail. The subject is not fully understood by all who admit its importance. The words, religious experience, are often pronounced, I suspect, without any clear conceptions of their true meaning. Religious experience itself, is frequently judged of by a wrong standard, and specimens of it have not seldom been selected for imitation, which by no means deserved such distinction. Indeed, if I do not greatly err, there are more mistakes prevalent in some portions of the community, as to the operations and signs of experimental religion, than in regard to almost any other topic. It may not be useless to dwell for a time upon some of them.

1. In the first place, then, I have known persons, thought by themselves and by their friends to be the subjects of experimental religion, whose dispositions and pursuits would hardly have been different from what they were, if the sense of God's being and presence had

been quenched in their minds, and the future world had been to them as a mere nonentity. I have seen them, surrounded by ease and prosperity, and honored in the elegant exchange of the courtesies of society, pass through life in a sort of decent indifference to divine things, and drop at last into their graves wi h scarce any more *vital* religion than the animals had, that were perishing around them. And yet these persons dreamt of having experienced religion, because they professed it, and attended to its forms, and talked about it, and recommended it to their children.

2. In the next place, I cannot overlook an error, the opposite to this, and one that has prevailed more than most others in some parts of our land, giving birth to all the disgustful forms of fanaticism, and securing to coarse and violent men an unrighteous and fearful power over uninformed and timid minds. I allude to the false notion that true experimental religion is a feverish excitement, a paroxysm of passion, which must be produced by extraordinary influences, and which must be sustained by all possible abstractions from the accustomed pursuits and pleasures of society. Let me not be misunderstood, however. God forbid, that any one should infer from my noticing this error in such terms, that I am the advocate of coldness in religion. I allow, nay, I insist upon it, that no subject should awaken the energies of the soul like christian truth. The only point to which I speak, is the mistake, that there can be no genuine religious experience without excessive heat and agitation; a mistake, which is not a rare one, and which is the cause that many of the best disciples of Jesus are looked upon with suspicion. I only refer to the fact, that there *are* extacies which are merely animal, depending on the state of

the nervous system, and not always, nor indeed often, the true indices of character; that they are frequently found in persons of very little fixed religious principle, but of irritable tempers; and that they are experiences not only to be deprecated in all, but such as many most excellent individuals have been, from the very constitution of their minds, the extent of their knowledge, and the admirable discipline of their passions, utterly incapable of undergoing.

3. A third error, that deserves to be noticed, is the idea that religious experience, to be genuine, must be connected with only one set of religious opinions. It is not in my mind to affirm, that one's experiences are not at all affected by his opinions. I believe the contrary. I believe that our religious exercises are very much modified by the doctrines we hold to be true. And I would urge this fact as a motive to careful investigation, and as a caution against cherishing any opinions that have a hurtful tendency. Were I to descend to particulars in this connexion, I would say, beware of the belief that you were born with entire depravity of heart, lest it lead you to charge your sins to your constitution, or your Creator. Beware of the doctrine of moral inability, from the fear that being persuaded you can do nothing, you conclude you have nothing to do. Beware of the system that inculcates vicarious satisfaction and substituted righteousness, lest you be tempted to rely on foreign aid for what alone can be done by yourselves. Beware of false views of special grace, lest by waiting for miraculous influence you put yourselves out of the way of experiencing religion at all. Beware of the prevalent notion about the efficacy of a late repentance, for it may be, there is no way of instantaneous regeneration from the confine of a sinful life to the gates of heaven.

These opinions, and such as these, one would suppose must be unfriendly to practical religion, if any opinions can be so. Yet how many persons who hold them, have we not seen to be excellent Christians. And what should the fact teach us? What but that light is light, through whatever medium it struggles? that the gold is not annihilated by its alloy? that the gospel *may* effect its chief purposes, though connected with much which does not belong to it? What, in a word, but that it is a mistake to suppose, that genuine religious experiences are associated with only one class of opinions? Indeed, is there a sect in christendom that cannot boast of its saints? There is, I am persuaded, enough of truth in the creed of every christian denomination to sanctify and save the soul, only let that truth have its perfect work. Suppose that you could not assent, in all its details, to the formulary of faith adopted by any of the contending parties. Could you not, for all that, experience religion? Could you not feel that God is wise and good, and that you owe him your love and obedience? Could you not be sensible of your sins and repent of and forsake them? Could you not receive Jesus Christ as your Saviour, and possess yourselves of his spirit, and endeavor to tread in his footsteps? Could you not be persuaded, and act from the persuasion, that your Creator and Judge has so constituted the moral world that misery shall follow sin, and happiness shall flow from holiness? Well, this, and such as this, is religious experience; and it is what may be found in every sect of Christians. It is, therefore, wrong to say that religious experience is necessarily connected only with the peculiar tenets of some one class of christian professors.

4. Another error relating to the subject is, that true religious experiences consist of the same exercises in all thorough converts. There is, we all know, a certain defined process prescribed in some books and sanctioned by some churches, through which every one, of whatever character, is required to pass before he can be recognised as having experienced religion satisfactorily. There are the same convictions for all, whether they have sinned little or much, and there are the same agonies, and then the same raptures. That this, however, cannot be correct, seems to me obvious. It is impossible in the nature of things for all persons to have precisely the same experiences, for all have not been alike vicious; all do not need equal reformation; all are not susceptible of the same impressions; all are not placed in similar situations; all have not the same opportunities nor the same motives. Now, in view of such diversities, which I think I may take it for granted no one will deny to exist, who will say that all must, nay, that all *can* have the same experiences? And who that knows any thing of the subject, as he ought to know it, will have it in his heart to condemn his neighbor, as unworthy of his christian fellowship, for not having gone through the full course of his own spiritual exercises? Different individuals may be equally good Christians, and yet their experiences may have been as unlike as their persons. One may not be able to recollect the time when he did not love God and man, and aim to do his duty. Another may remember distinctly when he first began to give his thoughts to divine things. Such being of necessity the case, it is evidently a mistake to suppose that religious experiences must be the same in all true Christians.

5. One other error, which has been very fruitful of evil, is that of those who seem to think and speak and act as if to have *once* in their life undergone a change, to have once passed through the process of regeneration, constitutes an unquestionable passport to heaven. Persons of this description are not unfrequently to be met with. They are sure they have been born again, and this conviction, if not the whole of their experience, is that on which they chiefly rely, as the evidence of their final acceptance with God. Now, I do not say that some may not at certain seasons have felt the power of religion in a very peculiar manner. Nor would I speak contemptuously of those extraordinary emotions, to which such, as have enjoyed them, delight to recur. But that the sensations of any one time, however peculiar they may have been, should be all, or the greater part, of the ground of the Christian's hope, seems to me to be not only an error, but a very dangerous one. And it is so, among other reasons, because the feeling of security and confidence, which it produces, blinds one to the necessity of continual circumspection in subsequent life, and thus the chief motive of future exertion is taken away. The true doctrine, relative to religious experiences, in this respect, is, that we should be content with none that are past, but should be perpetually seeking for new and better ones. The well disciplined Christian has religious experiences every day; and it is from a patient continuance in them, and from this alone, under God, that he derives the hope of inheriting the promises made to the faithful.

But it must be painful to my readers, certainly it is so to me, to dwell upon the misapprehensions of our fellow men in respect to so sacred a subject, as that which is before

us. I therefore pass by unnoticed some others, that occur to me as very common, though less injurious than those I have mentioned, and ask your attention, while I attempt to state to you, at considerable length, what I deem to be that genuine religious experience, which, as the Apostle says, and as Unitarians believe, produces the hope that will not disappoint us.

III. What, then, is genuine religious experience? its nature? its *characteristics?* I may partly answer the question, by asking another. What is genuine experience in respect to other subjects? What is literary experience? What is agricultural experience? What is mercantile experience? To these questions there is no difficult answer. Every one knows that, by experience, when the term is used in these connexions, is meant, the result of the practical application of principles appropriate to these connexions. Or it means the knowledge, skill, devotedness, and satisfaction, derived from reducing what belongs to the theory of these different sorts of business to practice. Now, precisely the same kind of answer is to be given to the question, what is religious experience. Religious experience is the result of the practical application of religious principles, or, it is the knowledge, skill, devotedness, and satisfaction, derived from reducing what belongs to the theory of religion to practice. Accordingly, we may be said to experience religion just in proportion as, by employing our thoughts upon it, our minds are enlightened and ennobled; as, by setting our affections upon it, our hearts are interested and sanctified, and as, by acting from it, our habits of life become holier and stronger. Or, to express the same thing in fewer words,—religious experience is the fruit of the principles of religion faithfully applied to the mind, the heart,

and the life. To be complete and satisfactory, it must have these three relations. If it fails in respect to either, it is so far defective, and lessens proportionably the grounds of christian hope. Let us dwell a little on religious experience in the three relations I have mentioned.

1. I have said that religious experience is the fruit of the principles of religion faithfully applied to the mind. It is what the understanding, the reason, all the intellectual faculties, are concerned with. Indeed, here is the source of the religion of the heart and life. Without knowledge, there could not be any religious experience. But I wish to confine myself now to the effects of religion on the mind alone. I would have it understood, that in embracing Unitarianism, we do not burden ourselves with a cumbersome apparatus, which perplexes and retards, instead of facilitating, the operations of intellect. Revelation, as we view it, was not designed to limit reason, but to call it into new and better exercises. Our system is suited, above all others, we think, to develope, strengthen, and ennoble the mental faculties. Till it does this, we say its work is not accomplished. I cannot insist upon this efficacy of God's truth on the mind too strongly. I fear it is not duly estimated. Religion has been placed too much in creeds and too little in thought. It has served to darken and belittle the soul, when it should have illumined and enlarged it. God gave it to make the mind free and strong; but man, in his ignorance or his folly, has forged fetters out of it, by which the mind has been cramped and made impotent as a child's. Let it be so no more. Let not the whole mental existence be shrunk and shrivelled into the dimensions of a party system, tolerable only in times long since

gone by. Do not think, in your manhood, to wear the swaddling bands of your infancy. Assert, and enjoy, that liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free.

There *is* a freedom of thought, an enlargement of view, an elevation of soul, a perpetual putting forth of its faculties upward and onward, towards God and heaven, which nothing gives but a pure religion, and which we cannot value too highly. Yes, and the mind that has been brought to this state of activity and lofty aspiration, is as much superior to common minds, in respect to all that truly exalts human nature, as the most cultivated intellect in civilized society is to that of the rudest savage of the forest. I do not know of a better word to express the immediate cause of this sort of mental experience, than the old scriptural word—*faith*—an enlightened faith in the divine perfections and purposes, as revealed by Jesus Christ. I use the term, however, in no restricted sense. I mean not by it, a mere belief in this or that doctrine, which the contending sects make the topic of unceasing controversy. But I mean by it, that all-comprehending principle, call it a sentiment, or a conviction, or what you will, which implies confidence and trust in the power, wisdom, and goodness of Almighty God; which preserves the faculties open to the light of the divine communications, through whatever medium they may come; which keeps up a strong and steady current of thought towards the Infinite and Eternal; which gives to the words of Jesus an authority that belongs to the teachings of none other than a divinely commissioned messenger from the Universal Father; which is constantly arming conscience with new power, and enduing the soul with fortitude to bear up under any trial, and giving courage to tread down temptation in the

way of duty, and ensuring the ready consecration of every faculty to the known requisitions of God's will.

Such I conceive to be genuine religious experience, in respect to the human mind. This is what, as Unitarian Christians, we should aspire to. We are not to rest satisfied, till it invests the thought of God with absolute power over every other thought; till it makes the future predominate habitually over the present; till it clothes the knowledge imparted by the Saviour with an importance, which no other knowledge possesses; till it renders nature, providence, and scripture, continually tributary to the treasures of our wisdom; till it gives every day new impressions of the dignity of our nature, and higher views of its capacity for improvement; till it seems, indeed, to create new faculties within us; till it enables us to look upon the divine works with an eye that shall discern fresh beauties at every successive glance; till, in a word, it reveals to us God in every thing good, and every thing good in God.

2. I have said that religious experience is the fruit of the principles of religion faithfully applied to the heart. Unitarianism is by no means a system adapted only to the intellect. We are not the philosophical pupils of a master who asks for the service of the mind alone. Ours is a religion in which the affections are concerned. Though our experiences do have their source in knowledge, and must be always guided by reason, yet they are not to be marked with coldness. We hold that the man, whose religious exercises are confined to the frigid region of his understanding, has taken but some of the first steps in the christian course. 'Give me thine heart,' is the divine injunction; and this, we know, we must give, or our experience worketh not the hope of the gos-

pel. Feeling is as important as conviction. Affection is as essential to true piety as it is to true friendship. Who would take from this its glow? But you might as well do it; as deprive religion of its warmth, by restricting it to the cold province of the understanding. Mistake me not, however. The danger of insensibility is not all on the side of the intellect. The affections, in religion, as in every thing else, may suffer from the meaner propensities. They often do so in what are called revivals. There are artificial excitements, there are impressions on the senses, not on the soul, which exhilarate the system for a time, and then bring on torpor and spiritual death. This we must guard against as for our life. The spirit that was created to attach itself to God and goodness, with a pure, steady, unconquerable love, must not disappear in carnal absorption; must not subside into the mere physical nature; must not sink and sleep in the animal functions; must not be rocked and lulled into lethargy by the bodily movements. It must ever be a living, active, holy spirit, full of love for its Creator and its duty.

Divine truth never accomplishes its full purpose, where it does not both awaken and cherish a devout and generous sensibility. Did God reveal himself to us, do you think, in the affecting character of a tender Father, only to produce a conviction in our mind? Did the blessed Jesus speak and die, as never man spake and died, only that his words and example might be deposited in our memory? Is the curtain raised for us that shut out from the view of former generations the world of spirits, merely that we might have new subjects of speculation? Oh! no. The truths of our religion were designed to touch the deep springs of human nature; and these are in the heart. They were wisely so designed, be-

cause they are to rule in a soul, that is agitated by various passions; which, if not governed by something stronger than themselves, will put to hazard its virtue and its peace. Now to experience religion thoroughly, is to give it complete control over these dangerous propensities of our nature. I do not mean that the passions are to be extinguished; but that they are to be so chastened down and so directed, as that they shall be habitually on the side of God and duty; performing their appropriate office calmly and steadily indeed, yet with energy; preserving an easy susceptibility of soul to every thing that comes from and relates to the source of all good; having ready sympathy with all that is pure and excellent in human beings, into whatever name they may have been baptized; and urging the whole man onward to new and still greater attainments.

Such I understand religious experience to be, as it relates to the heart. As Unitarians, we are not to be content with what our religion does for us, unless it quickens, controls, and sanctifies the affections; unless it subdues the inordinate love of the world by kindling up a nobler love within us; unless it creates a dread of sin, stronger, ay, stronger, than the dread of death; unless it awakens desires after holiness as intense as the desire of life; unless it directs the full force of the affections to high and worthy objects; to God, to Christ, to holiness, to heaven.

3. I have said that religious experience is the fruit of the principles of religion faithfully applied to the life. No convictions, no feelings, are enough without this. Unitarianism is eminently a practical religion. We believe, that he who *doeth* righteousness, and he alone, is truly righteous. We hold, that the perfection of christian experience is the actual consecration of the thoughts

and affections to God, in that way of well doing, to which the finger of God, in his providence, every day points. We have not perfect sympathy with any who confine their religion to particular seasons and localities. We say it is of little worth, unless it accompanies men into their ordinary pursuits, and causes its influence to be felt in the diversities of innocent and useful occupation. Religion and business, we maintain, are not separate interests. The duties of the Christian are not distinct from the duties of the man. The narrow way to heaven runs directly through the busy scenes of the world. The substance of religious service is moral service. The moral man is the only thoroughly experienced Christian.

From this it will doubtless be inferred, that I regard much which passes in the world for religion as false. And certainly I wish it to be so inferred. There is a religion of places, which I call local religion. There is a religion of times, which I term periodical religion. There is a religion of ordinances, which I name ritual religion. There is a religion of passion, which I denominate feverish religion. There is, too, a verbal religion, a party religion, a controversial religion, a sensual religion. But what is it all worth, if it be no more than this? What is it all worth, if it does not improve the life? Believe me, true religion is never divorced from true morality. As much as we have of this, we have of that, and no more. They cannot exist separately. The value of our experiences is to be estimated, not by the devotions of the Sunday, but by the doings of the week; not by what we seem to be at church, but by what we are at home, and in the places of our traffic. Our religion, if genuine, will go with us wherever we go, and dwell with us wherever we dwell, drawing us

into closer intimacy with our God, multiplying and strengthening the ties that bind us to the wise and good among men, and preserving us unspotted from the world. Christianity seeks to commend and dignify the common pursuits of men, not to disparage them. It is into the domestic, social, and business character, that it was designed to carry its purifying, controling, and ennobling power. Indeed, it is upon the broad altar of society that our most acceptable sacrifice is offered up to the universal Father. Those prayers are best received above, which ascend from men, whose hearts are pledged and whose hands are consecrated to the good of their fellows.

Thus, our religion is social and practical; social and practical, both in its nature and its effects. Of this character must be our experiences, if we would have the hope that 'maketh not ashamed.' We expect to be saved, not by being drawn by our faith from our appropriate offices in the ordinary pursuits of society, but by being sanctified by it in the very act of fulfilling them. Therefore it is, that Unitarianism is never heard bidding the domestic to leave her employment in order to enjoy her religious impressions, or the mechanic to sit down in indolent musings because he has become pious, or the merchant to forsake his business that he may nurse his experiences. Oh no. We would, indeed, persuade all to renounce the world, with respect to its false principles, its vicious spirit, and its harmful pleasures. But we would persuade all, at the same time, to regard the world, while they live in it, as the place of their noblest christian achievements; as the scene arranged by Providence, for activity, for trial, and for the perfecting of the character. There, is the post assigned to every man by his Creator. It were cowardly, not to say unchristian, to forsake it.

Am I told, by way of objection, that it is difficult to maintain it amid the world's exposures? I know it is so. But I know as well that it is more difficult to be a thorough Christian in solitude. Unitarianism does not profess to remove all difficulties from our path, though it does enable us to surmount them. It is not indeed the easy way of faith without works, of devotion without virtue, of feeling without practical effort; and I thank God that it is not. Difficulty is appointed to man in great kindness. Our character would be weak and puny, if we had nothing to struggle with and overcome. What is the plant that grows up in the shade? What is the mountain oak that has wrestled with the storm? Even Jesus Christ, had difficulty to encounter, and this too at every step of his progress. But who will say that he did not reap benefit from it? The scriptures tell us, that he was 'made perfect through suffering.' And then, too, his reward was the greater for it. It was 'for enduring the cross and despising its shame,' say the same scriptures, that he was exalted at the right hand of God. To the Author and Finisher of our faith we are to look for a pattern. God has placed us in this world of virtuous men and of vicious men, this world of toil and temptation, this world of difficulty and sorrow, not that we should escape from its trials and its duties; but that we should be in the midst of them, bearing ourselves manfully and religiously, and perfecting holiness, in his fear, by combating and vanquishing the evils of our lot. Yes, it is in the world, in the diversified relations of life, in the daily pressure of multiplied pursuits, whether at home or abroad, in the shop or in the field, in the office or in the mart, that the reality of our religious experiences must appear; and if it appears not there, it is in vain that it does so here.

He that is not a Christian in his common, every day dependences and avocations, is not a Christian at all. A man who is a tyrant in his family, or a knave in the place of his business, or immoral anywhere, may *talk* of his experiences, if he please;—but, let me tell him, they have, in the sight of the omniscient God, no more desert than the breathings of the winds, or the playings of the sunbeams. Look then, to your life, Christians. Here is the true test of the genuineness of your experiences. Other evidences may deceive you ; this never can. Others may be misunderstood ; this bears signatures intelligible to men and angels.

IV. Thus, I have answered, as I was able, the question, what is religious experience ? We perceive there is no mystery about it. It is a plain, practical matter, to which every one is competent, who will apply the principles of God's revelations according to the *methods* of his appointment. What are these methods ?

1. I take it upon myself to say, first, it is his appointment, that we aim to make the thought, that we are *able* to apply these principles so as to become the subjects of experimental religion, one of our most familiar thoughts. And I say this, because every page of his holy word addresses us as free agents, capable of moral obedience, responsible to him for our actions, and destined to reward or punishment according to our doings and character. Has God, then, given us the ability, and thus made it our duty, to experience religion ? Let us not hesitate to think that we can experience it. Here is the beginning of every great achievement. That this is true in business, every one knows. It is true in religion. He who *imagines* himself impotent, will be likely to be impotent in fact. Form no low estimate of the power which your

Maker has given you. It is ingratitude to the Giver to despise his gifts. It paralizes effort to fancy that little or nothing can be done. Think that you can do much, and you will attempt much. I have small hope of him who is always brooding over what he calls the worthlessness of human nature. I have great hope of him, who, while he thinks and speaks modestly of his attainments, believes he has faculties given him by God for noble acquisitions.

2. In the next place, believing that we can experience religion, we are to regard it as God's appointment, that we give *attention* to the subject. Nothing of course is to be expected without this. Religious acquisitions are subject to the same law with other acquisitions. They demand that we apply our minds to serious, intense, and prolonged consideration of religious topics. We may find the task a difficult one at first. What then? Do we not know that this is the case with almost all new subjects? Have we not found the same to happen in our worldly concerns? Yet, by strenuous and repeated effort, have we not found the repugnance to grow less and less, till at length we came to be pleased with what before was irksome? And so it is in spiritual concerns. Let it be, that religion has little attraction for us at first. This is not a sufficient reason for abandoning it. We should rather force ourselves to contemplate it; should compel our wandering thoughts to dwell upon it once and again; should remember that if we dismiss it now, because it does not suit our taste, it will certainly return at last to suit our taste still less, and perhaps to find us incapable of feeling its power and enjoying its comforts. At the same time, we may assure ourselves, that, by persevering in efforts of attention, we shall infallibly gain the mastery over our reluctant

thoughts, and finally shall come to love what, in the beginning, was a subject of indifference, if not of disgust.

3. Finally, in seeking to be the subjects of experimental religion, we must consider it as God's appointment, that we use *all the means* which he has given us, adapted to fix its principles within us, and to impart its spirit to our conduct. These means are various. One of them is, to avoid as much as possible the influence of profligate associates. Another is, to have nothing to do with books that disguise impurity under the name of wit, and soften licentiousness by the coloring of fancy. A third is, to seize, amid secular pursuits, every moment we can, for serious reflections. Again, we must inquire of history for the wisdom of the wise and the examples of the good, and ask of nature and providence what they can teach us of the divine character and purposes. It is, also, to be a settled principle with us, to mingle our sympathies and devotions, as we have opportunity, with those of our fellow men in the temple of the Most High. Then, there are the holy scriptures, which speak of the Father of all, of the Redeemer, of heaven, of hell, and of man's duty, to be read and pondered. The ordinances of the church, too, are the appointed helps to the perfection of our experiences. There is prayer, moreover, that means of wonderful efficacy—private and domestic prayer, which we are no more to neglect than our daily food. And last, though not least, there is action—useful action, from which, God has ordained, there shall come back to the heart a quickening and sanctifying power, making that, which is the purpose and end of the affections, also the means of rendering them holier, stronger, and more efficient prompters of all the virtues.

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THE

DANGER OF DELAY.

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THE DANGER OF DELAY.

Boast not thyself of tomorrow.—Prov. xxvii. 1.

And yet, although this is the counsel of both reason and scripture, and although every man if he thinks of the matter a moment must be convinced of its wisdom, how few practically regard it. Indeed, if there is any one thing in which men seem most to agree, it is in reversing this precept of Solomon,—boasting of to-morrow—reckoning upon it. They are not in general, judging by their conduct, more sure of to-day than they are of to-morrow. They speak with as much confidence of the business they shall transact, the journeys they shall commence, the studies they shall pursue, the good or evil deeds they shall attempt or complete on the morrow, as of what they shall do to-day or the next moment. But the wise man would rebuke this spirit. He would warn us against the presumption of relying on to-morrow—or even on another moment beyond the present, seeing the one, strictly speaking, is as uncertain as the other. And we must give to his language in the text, if we would receive its true meaning, not a literal and narrow interpretation, but understand him to speak of all future time under the similitude of to-morrow. Boast not thyself, O, man! he

would say, of that which is concealed behind the veil of the future. Place not thy hope in its uncertainties. Defer not thy work of duty to opportunities that may never arrive. Delay not to forsake thy sin and turn unto God, thinking that when to-morrow dawns thou wilt be better prepared. Postpone not an irksome task to the future in the belief that it will then be pleasanter and easier. Trust not to the deceptive language of the heart, that by and by the heart and life shall be wholly and cheerfully surrendered to God, but that now, there must be indulgence and ease, and devotion to other and pressing cares. Centre all thy hopes, if thou wouldst be wise, in to-day. Do now, what thou wishest to do, and which if not done in season, thou knowest well, thy life will be a burden, and eternity a terror. *Now* is thine, to-morrow may never be.

Such is the true sense of the prudent king's maxim. It is a maxim not only of Jewish, but of Christian, of universal morals.

And it derives its importance, not wholly nor chiefly, from any bearing it can have upon the transactions of *this* world. It is indeed wise in the most inconsiderable affairs not to trust to to-morrow, for what can be done to-day. And in many of the dealings of man with man, the heaviest losses and most grievous mischances have overtaken him, because he was so stupid, or so thoughtless, or so rash, as to put off to another day a labor that should have been done now. Many a battle has been lost, many a city surprised and sacked, many a house burned to the ground, many a fair ship foundered or wrecked, many a calamity for which there was no remedy has overtaken individuals and communities, by deferring

till to-morrow, or even another hour, what was the business of the present moment. So that in its relation to the prosperity of men and their welfare in this present world, it is important that a man do not reckon on to-morrow when to-day is in his hands. And it were earnestly to be wished, that the indubitable sorrows and distressing adversities, that come upon multitudes of those who procrastinate in the things of this brief and transitory scene of our being, would but serve as lessons and warnings, to make them active and seasonable in the more momentous concerns touching the soul and its future condition, and to teach them that consequences of woe, dreadful beyond all comparison with what ever happen on earth, will follow that fatal procrastination, that shall defer to a day or hour too late the repentance and preparation, on which heaven and salvation depend.

It is of delay, as respects the imperishable interests of the immortal soul, that I am now to speak. And it is with reference to these interests, and the preparation for the future life that Religion exhorts us in earnest and solemn tones—trust not to—reckon not upon—defer not till—to-morrow.

1. The work, which man has to do, is too great and too important to bear postponement and be put upon the hazard of such an uncertainty.

If this work of self preparation, which both sound reason and religion demand at our hands, were like many of the petty concerns of this life, on which little depends, and from which no solemn consequences flow, it might, indeed, be put off, and oftentimes no evil ensue—or none, but such as might be repaired. But I would

put it to the conscience of every reflecting man, if it be such a work, if there be any to be placed in comparison with it for its magnitude? And yet, there is no duty, however insignificant, in the way of our daily calling, no affair of business, that concerns our worldly interest, that we so lightly defer to another day, as this which concerns the soul and eternity. Though a man will, indeed, now and then meet a heavy loss in his fortune, because he loitered, or trifled, or stood still, when he should have pressed swiftly on, yet generally, let there be a great object to be accomplished, bearing on reputation, advancement, or property, and the hour of action cannot come too soon, and the work to be done cannot call for so much time and industry and labor, as will stand waiting to be employed, and he would no more delay to act, and in season too, than he would to satisfy the crying wants of his animal nature. But is it often so in religion? Is it often that we see this eagerness to embrace a present opportunity—that we see men trembling lest to-day should pass by and nothing be done for their peace? Yet with what reason might we tremble, when we think of what it is which we have to accomplish, and the little time at the very best that is given us for the work, and the danger that ere it is half done, even if we labor with diligence, death may surprise us.

For what is this work of religion? It is to prepare ourselves against the solemnities and final allotments of God's judgment day. Our minds, through all their powers and capacities, are to be educated and filled with knowledge both of human and divine things. Our desires, that so love to rest on sensual and temporary things, are to be raised to spiritual objects. Our affections are to be sanctified and

find their rest in Heaven. Our habits are all to be gained over to the side of virtue. Our lives are to be made subject to the universal rule of purity and integrity. If we have been wanderers from God and slaves to sin, the task of repentance is to be begun and completed. If we are habitually cold and earthward in our feelings, the heart is to be warmed and lifted to Heaven. In a word, man—imperfect, erring, tempted, sinning man, is to fit himself by his own efforts, by the effectual suppression and subjection of what is evil in his nature, and the careful rearing and perfecting of that which is good, for a joyful inheritance of that glorious immortality that has through the mercy of God been promised. And is this a work, considered in any of its relations and aspects, that can be thought an easy one, and be safely deferred to a more convenient season? Does it look as if it could spare any of the time which God in his mercy allows us? Is it so light a task, that a day, or an hour, or the remnant minutes of a wasted life will suffice for it? Truly, if we reflect upon the circumstances of difficulty, which beset this whole business, the extreme reluctance with which many persons are brought to think of it at all, the slowness and heaviness of spirit, with which they move in the work if they do enter upon it, the many times they go wholly back to where they first started from, the hesitancy, lukewarmness, temporising, that accompany them all the way through, if we think of the influence of the world, the claims of business, and pleasure, and folly, of friends, family, and society, the necessary calls of industry, and the unnecessary and artificial ones of custom and fashion, of the large draughts that sickness, pain, uneasy sensations, trifling and foolish thoughts, and unavoidable inter-

ruptions make on the time and spirits,—if we think of these things, we shall say and believe, that with these hindrances and difficulties and the nature of the work combined, a day from the longest life God ever gives can be but ill spared, and that he were twice a fool, who, if in his heart he wished to do this work, postponed for a single hour so urgent and mighty a task, which, if he were to give to it his whole strength and undivided soul, he could scarce in the longest life hope thoroughly to accomplish. Oh, what amazing stupidity is there in most of us, to think, knowing, as we do, what the gospel and reason both demand of us to be happy hereafter, that we can dose on through to-day, and to-morrow, and the next week, and for another month, and another year, and that then, time enough will be left to rouse up, and clear our eyes, and stretch our limbs, and begin the race. If there is not a single post of duty or honor upon earth, in the whole circle of human affairs, from which a man would not be spurned with reproaches and contempt, if he should be chargeable with one half the incorrigible duliness and unwillingness of which he is so often guilty in the things that relate to his final salvation, what, I would ask in all seriousness, can we reasonably look for at last at the hands of a just God, but shame and exclusion, in that we have trodden under foot in our indolence, or sin, or mad devotion to other things, the promises of eternity ?

2. Again, count not upon this to-morrow, depend not upon it, defer not thy work to it, for it may never come.

Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth ; and it may bring forth death as well as life, pain and sickness and lassitude and imbecility as well as vigor, and strength,

and new returns of health. The dispositions, and purposes, and resolves, and aspirations of to-morrow—supposing it to come—may be as weak, and earthward, and transient as those of to-day. Why not? What is this charm and promise that hangs about to-morrow, that it should take all the worth and honor of life to itself? Who has told us, that it is possessed of such strange virtues, and abounds with such potent and blessed influences, that the moment it has dawned all the darkness of our minds will be dispelled, our inglorious sloth will change to christian zeal, and all the clouds of doubt and error and fear will clear away? But more than this; and first of all, what right have we to reckon on the future? The arrows of death are flying thick through the air; they are striking down on every side those who were, or seemed to be, of as fair promise as ourselves, and how can we tell that we may not be the very next victims? Others, we see, are taken off in the confusion of sudden fear and an imperfect preparation,—their hands but just applied to their task, their first prayer just leaving their lips, in the beginning of their new life,—or else in the very heat and pollution of their vices, in the folly of a raging passion, or the impurity of a crying sin, or in the midst of their drunken revels and low debaucheries, without a moment's warning to bring the spirit into a posture of calmness and decency, befitting its awful state and its approaching change. And if others are thus dealt with, why not we? Has a statute of exemption been taken out? Are we privileged and safe, where the rest are exposed to a common danger? If we are not, as reason tells us we are not, let us not live and act as if we were. Let us not be so mad, as to stake on the contingency of

to-morrow, or a following day, or even another year, the infinite concernments of futurity.

But suppose we are spared till to-morrow—suppose we have reached that late period of life, to which we deferred the work of religion, at which we have resolved to repent, and get the better of our sins, and give ourselves for the remainder of our days to God and to the calm and holy duties of a religious preparation;—suppose we have reached this period, and our good purposes hold out, what have we gained? I believe you will say, nothing has been gained, and the loss has been great. For,

3. In the next place, the work which we have to do increases in difficulty, in proportion as it is delayed.

It is notorious, and too plain to need any thing more than a passing illustration, that they, who have put off the task of repentance and religious preparation, have increased the difficulty of doing what they intend ultimately to do, with every day that has been added to their lives. We are subject to the same laws in the acquisition of virtue or religion, as of other things. They who have been brought up in ignorance, when on arriving at maturity—ashamed of, or lamenting their deficiencies—they give themselves to the task of recovering lost time, find the task heavy, and the labor insupportable; for the mind through long disuse has become dull and unapt to learn, and the thoughts, unaccustomed to restraint and the narrow confinement of a single study, grow weary and wander away to the ends of the earth; and to one learning at that advanced and unnatural age, the elements of knowledge are burdensome beyond endurance, or are dismissed as unattainable. And so of any bodily art and any

intellectual science. But the operation of this law is even more distinctly and fatally visible in morals and religion. If the studies proper to youth become wearisome and cannot so much as be attempted in age, so in morals and religion those habits of virtue or religion, which were hated or resisted in the days of youth and manhood, cannot be acquired in the later periods of life, or with the difficulties of the task greatly increased. If you see a man in old age striving to perform the feats of youth—sitting down to a daily task—aiming to recover bya severe discipline the worldly accomplishments, which were neglected when young, you behold but a feeble image of him, who has grown gray in the science of sin, aiming on the sudden to love and cultivate habits of virtuous thought and action, and to find in heavenly contemplations and the love of God that joy and repose, so needful under the privations and weaknesses of the closing years of life.

When a man defers the labor and duty of repentance from day to day and from year to year, he little thinks how he is arming with new means of resistance the foe, with whom he still purposes one day to contend. When a man simply postpones his more religious purposes, when, living a life of religious indifference and insensibility, he yet determines at some future time to rouse up to the love of virtue and excellence, and aspire after a likeness to the children of God, and in the mean time plods on in the same old way of religious apathy and unconcern, waiting for a convenient season, he too little considers that by the course he takes, every day resolving, and every day breaking his resolutions, he is hardening his heart and blunting his sensibilities, so that by

the time old age arrives he will find himself wholly indisposed to, as well as incapable of, the long deferred duty. But however little these things may be considered, they are fatally true, and in this view the danger of delay cannot be overrated. He who thus reckons on to-morrow is treasuring up for himself inevitable and bitter disappointment; he is relying on that which will deceive him with the treachery of a rotten staff. He who imagines that the future will find him better disposed to do a disagreeable and painful duty than the present, is like one, who thinks that the pain of an amputation will be less to-morrow than to-day, and so defers it, while the disease gathers head by the delay. What reason can the sinner find to convince him, that sin will grow more hateful when the sun has once more risen and set, or has done so twenty times, than it is now? And what shall occur to-morrow to give vigor to those resolves, which to-day are weaker than the purposes of a child? Only let him for one moment remember the past and its experiences, its long series of irresolute acts and transient resolutions, and he will feel that all such reliances on the future are delusions to lure him on in the way that leadeth unto death. He will feel that the sinful habits, which youth rooted deep in the soul, are not so easily thrown off and subdued. Alas! what habits are like those of sin, for strength? what bonds like the bonds of sensual indulgence? what fetters and manacles like the soft and silken ones of pleasure? Who is known to escape from them, that has lain bound a willing slave, drunk in pleasure, dissolved in effeminacy, till age has once crept over his frame and sent its feebleness into the mind? What to-morrow of hope is there to such a one? He may indeed weep and bemoan his sad

captivity, and wish in his heart that he were free; but his moral force is all gone out of him, and while he loathes and detests them, he hugs the chains that bind him, and twines them round and round his dishonorable limbs. And though by a mad and desperate effort, in the sudden energy of a virtuous purpose, he may for an instant leap clear of his shackles, he is soon seen, the fire of sin unquenched in his eye, posting back to the beloved haunts of forbidden joys, and fitting to his limbs one by one the fetters he had so lately broken in pieces. Consider the drunkard, the sensualist, the debauchee, look into their lives, and confess that their progress and their fate are like this. Where shall we search for the reformed rake, the reclaimed libertine, the cleansed and purified sot? Who has found their tastes to be refined and exalted by age? When has it happened, that, oppressed by the imbecilities of a premature old age, they have then taken upon themselves the toils of virtue and died its sincere votaries? Let us believe then, if we are content to abide by the truth, that the task which we have to perform increases in difficulty with the degree in which we postpone it, that sin gathers strength and winds about us its cords the closer, the longer we continue in her service, that the life of religion appears the more irksome and hateful the longer we hesitate to begin it, and if old age still find us in sin, that the duties of that life will become impracticable. To-day, then, if ye will hear the voice that cries to you, harden not your hearts; but open them, lay them bare to the influences of the Gospel. Think of the issues that hang on the present life; remember that each one for himself, through the blessing of God, is the founder and builder of his salvation. Let it not then be

owing to delay, to stupid procrastination, that you should fail to ensure it.

4. Defer not till to-morrow—because from the very nature of virtue or religion, consisting as it does in established habits, fixed dispositions and biasses of the soul, a very long time is requisite for its growth and maturity, and the least delay may be attended by fatal consequences. True religion or virtue, when it reigns within as it ought, has the whole circle of the desires, affections, appetites, passions subject without the feeblest show of resistance to its strictest laws. All man's habits are then right, all his emotions holy, all his thoughts pure and heavenward. So supreme is his regard for the will of God, so exalted his reverence of his own nature, that none of the temptations of life have power to lead him into sin. He obeys not from constraint but through love. Virtue is his happiness. He has so disciplined his nature, so denied and subdued the sensual tendencies of his frame, that an unruffled calm reigns in his soul, which no notions of sin ever disturb. Such is virtue or religion. And is it the work of a day? Does this universal subjection of the man to the control of the very highest principles of conduct and of thought, imply a moral toil of light import, which can be gone through at a moment's or a day's notice—especially when we take into view the amazing strength of human passion, and circumstances of danger and difficulty into which men are so often thrown? If such is religion, can it come in obedience to a few earnest desires? Will a few wishes detain it? Will it come in answer to a prayer? Will tears buy it? Can groanings purchase it? Will a whole life of indo-

lent musing ensure it? Will raptures, or extacies, or frantic cries, tumultuous emotions, excited feeling, imagined visions, momentary sensations, sudden and transient, give us warrant of it? Not in the least—not in the least, you will say. *Then*, it might be left till to-morrow. *Then*, a day or an hour might be more than enough for its most perfect attainment. We might give to-day and to-morrow to pleasure, and the world, and our lusts, and count upon some future and remote hour, and feel safe, though the work were deferred to our dying bed. For that which consists in a simple emotion, or act of the mind, can be accomplished in a moment as well as in a life, in sickness as well as in health, on the bed of death as well as in the active scenes of life and duty. But if religion is not of this nature, if it is what it has just been described to be, then the delay which shall postpone the commencement of so great and desirable a work, so much as another day, may be fatal to us.

If, for instance, our hostility to virtue is great, and our desires are wayward, and our minds sensual, and our affections earthly and depraved, the labor and time necessary for our conversion in all these particulars will be great; a whole life of earnest and undivided effort—with some natures—may not be enough to ensure and complete it. How dangerous to put off the beginning of the work from day to day and year to year, as multitudes of the world so thoughtlessly and madly do? Even if the work of religion in our case be much easier than this, suppose we are only cold and indifferent, not given to vice, but not in love with virtue, not the votaries of excess and slaves to sin, but not stretching on toward perfection, not lovers of God, willing to go through the world in a course of dull and sluggish

obedience, as if we wished merely to escape by this middle path some great and threatened evil; suppose this is our case, and we are at length awakened to a sense of its danger, and desire with the whole soul to begin the work of life; is *this* either the work of a day, the easy labor of a few months or years even? And could he be wise, who with a solemn purpose of salvation in his heart, should dare to put it off till to-morrow, or a more convenient season?

5. Postpone not, the work of religion or virtue till to-morrow, or some uncertain future time, because it may then lose its value.

What *can* be the worth of that surrender of the mind to God, which is deferred to the last possible hour?

If we would know what value to put upon the service of a friend or servant, which after a long and vexatious delay he has at length done for us, or tried to do, we must know the reasons of his delay. If we would appreciate the value of a son's obedience, of his return to duty, we must know why he went astray, and why at length, after long indulgence in riotous living, he comes back to his father's house. And so in religion, and in relation to the eternal happiness of the soul, if we would know the precise value in the sight of God of that devotion to him and his will which, after long delays and much backwardness and reluctance, we do at length in the decline of life and decay of nature see fit to render him, we must inquire honestly and severely, why it was so long deferred, why so many years were given to sin, and why it is that the remaining few are so anxiously and tremblingly given to God.

It may not be positively affirmed, that the work which

has been deferred to the last, will in every instance be rejected as valueless; God is merciful, and the reasons of delay, if not valid ones, may yet be of some weight as arguments of extenuation. But it may be said, and we cannot help thinking that it will prove so, that the vast proportion of those who either sleep during these precious hours of labor, or give themselves to pleasure and sin, or in the midst of a busy life forget the soul and its Maker, when they at last, in the closing scene of life, rouse up, and bethink themselves, and begin in haste to do this great and then accumulated task, will find that they are too late, that the chance is gone, the opportunity has slipped away, the day is spent, the night at hand, and there remains nothing for them at the best but the tremblings of fear, and the agonies of doubt and despair.

Yet there may be reasons, which shall satisfactorily account for the delay of the work of religion and the soul's late approach to God. They, for example, who do not early know their duty as religious beings, cannot of course do it early; or it may be no wonder and no fault that it is delayed to a late hour. "How," says an apostle, "shall they call on him in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" And there may be many standing in this predicament—of an unavoidable ignorance of God and their duty—beside those who literally live beyond the sound of the gospel. The Heathen have not heard the sound of the gospel, for it has not gone out to them. But there are many within the reach of our hands, if we will stretch them out, as ignorant of God and the provisions of grace in his Son, as they who live by Nile and Ganges—and

little, if at all, more blameable for that ignorance. Consider the miserable wretches, who fill the cellars and the garrets in all the lanes and alleys of a large city, who first drew their breath in those sad abodes, and hearing and knowing nothing of God, and having no examples before them but those of fraud, and violence, and profaneness, and impiety, grew up from their infancy in the love and relish of sin, and reached a full blown maturity in it, before ever one thought went upward to the Creator, or there was a single consideration started in the soul about its value and destination; consider the multitudes throughout Christian nations and communities, who endure the privations of an extreme poverty, the evils of that wandering outcast life brought upon them by the force of circumstances and the inscrutable appointment of Providence, or by an early imprudence and improvidence inherited from parents worse than themselves; consider all these, and their imperfect opportunities of arriving at a knowledge of the nature and demands of religion, and we may believe, that the mercies of God will be large enough to receive and own them, though at the very last hour they should cast themselves down at his footstool in the sorrows and prayers of a heart-breaking repentance. These are they, who in the midst of an ignorant, a thoughtless, a dissolute life, roused by some fearful providence, are suddenly converted from their wicked ways; have their minds opened to new views of life and the purposes of God, and give themselves to him in a ready and sincere service. These are they, who even at the last hour of life, having then first of all a knowledge of divine things spread out before them, do on the instant eagerly embrace it, weeping that the golden opportunity had not sooner

been offered, and showing that had it been, it would have been gladly seized. These are they, who thus turning to God for the first time on their dying beds, may hope to find in him a compassionate judge.

But let not this afford encouragement to the sinner, who has long and wilfully persevered in the way, which he was a thousand times told, and himself knew, would end in death. They who live in the knowledge and enjoyment of christian truth their lives long, and sabbath after sabbath hear the great points of religion and duty stated from the oracles of God, and are long purposing a good life, but never find an hour for anything but worldliness and sin, and are thus at last surprised and taken off to their account in the terrors of an unprepared state, cannot, on grounds of reason or of scripture, hope for the mercy extended to the others. These are among the habitual slighters and despisers of the word and will of God, and for them nothing remains but a fearful looking for judgment. Virtue and acceptance lie in listening to and embracing the salvation as soon as proffered, whether early or late. This shows the child of God and the dispositions of Heaven. But for those who have always known of the nature and obligations of religion, have always basked beneath the light of two revelations, but have not thought it worth their while to turn their thoughts to such subjects, have cast from them their present consideration, thinking that there will be time enough at the end of life to answer all the claims of religion, and that in the mean time they will keep on in the way of sin—it is noteasy to see what room for repentance there can be in their case. They who thus deliberately, and on set purpose, as it were, put off the duties and acts

of the religious life, and would never do them at all if they could be safely avoided, have placed themselves among those who are farthest from the kingdom of God, against whom the door is shut. It is mournful to think how large a proportion these constitute of the nominally religious. For let all those, in a christian community, who are hating and putting far from them a religious life, ask themselves why it is they do so, and they will find that it is not because they are ignorant of God's will, but because they secretly purpose at last to change their character and conduct, to repent before they die, and thus make an atonement for the evil they have done. Repentance at last they imagine will be cheerfully accepted, and will wipe out all the guilt of the past. But they, who go on sinning in this intention by and by to repent, are they who never can repent. "The very intention is a fraud; instead of being the parent of true repentance, is itself to be repented of bitterly."*

If all, who turned to God at last, were such as had at the last hour of life their first knowledge of God and his acquirements, then might all be received. But multitudes of those, who turn to him at the end of life, are those who do so under far less worthy circumstances, so that the value of that religion which they at length offer is nothing or but little. What are some of those circumstances of delay which go so far to deprive repentance and religion of their value?

When men grow religious through fear, their late return to God through the influence of that motive has lost its value. Such men will live without religion as long as they

* Paley.

dare, and then, when they think that their days are nearly numbered, and the patience of God, which they have tried to the utmost, well nigh exhausted, and their case is almost desperate, they begin to look to their souls' concerns and betake themselves to their prayers and the other holy duties, which are, as they fondly believe, in a few months or days or hours to prepare them for heaven. One man you will see giving all the strength of his powers to the world and self-indulgence and the pursuits of interest or sin, putting far from him, as a hateful thing, the love and services of God, till God sends a messenger to him in the shape of a deadly malady, or nature is worn out and ready to drop in pieces, and then, that the world is passing away from him and all that remains for him is death and its consequences,—then you see him in haste to dedicate himself to God; then he would not for the world delay an hour to begin his preparation for eternity, the terrors of death are gotten hold upon him, and he flies to God whom he dreads, and to the doctrines and ministers of his religion which he has ever despised, for succor and deliverance; and in the folly of a miserable delusion persuades himself, that he shall not be abandoned to the darkness and death of that pit he has digged for himself and cast himself into. But can you think very highly of a religion like this? Has it anything sound or worthy or pure in it? Can you suppose it will avail anything? And is it not almost past belief, that men—and in other things reasonable and wise men—should come to be so besotted in what relates to their souls, as to think that God will accept in them, and count to them for righteousness, that conduct, of which if the counterpart were manifested toward them by their equals or depend-

ants in the petty concerns of life, they would spurn and reject it with indignation for its utter baseness and ingratitude and presumptuousness ? Such converts as these are no converts. These are not they who are received at the eleventh hour. These are they, who, we should suppose, reasoning from analogy and scripture, would be received at no hour. For they are no fitter for heaven, by any preparation which in an hour, a day, or a month they *can* have made for it, than they were before their repentance began. No virtue has been seated in the soul. No length of days and of trial has shown them to be immoveable in the rooted accomplishments of the Christian. This were impossible. Their christian and heavenly practice has confessedly been nothing. And as for their dispositions, they are of no more value. They are like the sorrows of a man that he has been a thief or a murderer, who is then for the first time sorry, when the judge utters his sentence of condemnation, or he stands upon the scaffold and the executioner is fitting to him the instrument of a shameful death. He bewails the unhappy issue of his bad life, and he is sorry therefore that he lived it ; he fears to die in agony, and in that proportion is he sorry for his crimes. But the chance is many times more than equal, that if he were saved from the death, he would go back again to his old practices. We know it to be so very often in regard to those who suffer the lesser punishments of the law, imprisonments and other penalties. When the punishment is withdrawn, their sorrow, if they felt any, stops, and they fall again into their former courses. And so the sinner, who repents at last wholly through fear,—because death stares him in the face,—may not feel any confidence, that were the threat-

ened sentence suspended, he would not sink back into the pollution of his former vices.

What, then, is the intrinsic value, and the acceptableness with God, of that religion, that virtue, that repentance, to which we have resorted through fear? I presume to believe, that we all feel that they have no value at all, or none which can be estimated. The only rule we have to go by in the case is against its being worth anything. The son, the friend, the servant, the prisoner, who repents under the influence of fear, and acts well for a time under its felt restraints, we cannot and do not trust. He must act well for a long period *with this motive withdrawn*, before he can be trusted. But in the case of the sinner, with the fear of death before him, this withdrawal is not supposable or possible; he *dies* in this fear; and who will dare to believe in, or trust to the sincerity and worth of, such repentance? It may indeed have that value, which sorrow for sin always has. But it can have no more. And we know from experience how little that is apt to be.

There is one other circumstance which tends greatly to deprive a late surrender of the soul to God of its value; which is, that it may have been put off till temptation has lost its power, sin its charms, virtue its difficulty, and the mind turns to virtue and heaven, not because it loves them, but because its old and long accustomed pleasures have ceased to give any satisfactions, through the exhaustion and decay both of body and mind.

Yet it must not be inferred, that there cannot be virtue without great difficulties to meet and overcome. Difficulty increases the lustre of virtue, but is not essential to it. Many, there cannot be a doubt, pass through life

with natures so calm and even, that they accomplish the work of life well and with ease. They feel few temptations to vice. They live in pureness on earth, and then, when the end comes, they are fit for their translation. The virtue of such has all the value their nature admits of, and all, therefore, that will be exacted. It would not weigh in equal balance with that, which has overcome bitter and unremitting opposition from nature within and circumstances without. The virtue must ever be most exalted, that has most to contend with; which is saved, yet as by fire.

The noblest offering, accordingly, which religion ever receives, or that is laid upon the altar of God, is when, in the words of the Apostle, "the body is presented a *living* sacrifice, holy and acceptable before God"—not after it has become dull and dead through the imbecilities of age, or incapacitated both for virtue and vice by disease and decay,—but when it is full of the high flush and fiery spirits of youth and manhood, when the passions and desires are in their strength, when the by-paths of sin seem full of tempting pleasures and strewn with flowers, and it *implies* something that these forms of sin are withstood, these strong and impetuous desires are denied and restrained, and the soul surrendered to God in a severe and constant obedience. This is the purest and noblest offering religion ever receives, and when it is this that we bear up the steps of the altar, it is better than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices, better than all faith, and penance, and pilgrimages, and the whole catalogue of those painful services which superstition ever pays.

But how different from this the sacrifice which they

offer, whose principle it has been to put off till to-morrow, and the latest period possible, the work in which religion and virtue consist. What weakness, what presumption, or what hardihood in man, to suppose that after the energy and enthusiasm of his being have been consecrated to sin and worldliness, God will accept those spiritless and imperfect services, those dull and wearisome hours, extorted by fear, which he shall at last choose to present to him. See if it be not so. One man, we will suppose, is, during the busy periods of life, and while all his powers are bright and vigorous, devoted to the pursuit of wealth—innocently pursued, an innocent pursuit. But, unwilling to regard himself as a religious being, casting away from his mind every idea of accountableness, he is not scrupulous as to the means by which he secures his end. He secures it, and rolls in wealth. Toward the end, or past the middle of his days, he thinks it would be well, seeing the present life must soon end, to look after the interests of futurity. And now, that for the first time he reflects upon himself and what he has been doing, he is amazed at his folly and struck dumb in the recollection of his wrong deeds and his ungodly life. Now that the *desire* of wrongdoing has passed away, and *that* has been secured for which it was resorted to, he begins to repent of it. Now that the temptation to his besetting sin is removed, he can abjure it and resolve to be virtuous. But, can he feel sure that if fortune had not so soon favored him, extreme old age or death itself—as our observation of life shows often to be the case—would not have surprised him still practising the same dishonesties and oppressions? And can he feel much confidence or comfort in his present virtuous purposes, in his present de-

vout frame? Is not the value of such late and forced religion exceedingly little in every view of the case? Does not the absence of temptation and difficulty divest this return of the soul to God of all, that clothes a voluntary, cheerful and arduous virtue with the splendors of heaven, and gives it the earnest of an eternal recompense?

And so with those who have been the slaves of sensual indulgences. What can be the worth, or sincerity even, of that repentance which is offered to God, not till after the cup of pleasure has been drained and its dregs are found to be distasteful and bitter; not till the course of sin has been run, and weariness and satiety have succeeded; not till every wicked and worldly desire throughout a long life has been unhesitatingly gratified, and the soul, then jaded and worn out, its passions dead, its desires asleep, thinks to give itself to virtue and God, and now that earth can no longer be enjoyed, make the best preparation it can for heaven? But is this anything? Is it anything to love virtue, when vice is no longer tempting? To deny an appetite, when it no longer solicits? To live temperately, when the palate has lost its relish? To give yourself to contemplation and devotion, when decrepitude ties you to your seat? To turn from the world, when the world has first turned from you; and when the strength and vigor of life have been given to sin, to devote the few remaining days of weakness and fear, when you can do nothing else, to piety and penitence?

Let us not then wickedly reckon upon to-morrow. Let us not defer to the last hour of a life devoted to the very opposite objects and pursuits, the work of heaven's preparation. If our previous life had thrown no addi-

tional obstacles in the way, it would be wholly chimerical to think of cultivating and rooting in a few months, or days, or years, at the end of life, the difficult habits of a universal Christian virtue. But with the evil habits and biasses of three or four score years first to contend with, to unsettle and eradicate, and then the further task of creating in the soul a disinterested and lofty love of what for so long a period it has hated—this seems wholly impracticable; or at least demands the strength of a moral Hercules; and few therefore may be supposed equal to its accomplishment.

Let us try to save ourselves from the delusions, that are so apt to mislead and ruin us in relation to this whole subject. Men seem obstinately bent on the belief, that they may live as they please the first part of their lives, and that by and by, when they come to die, will be time enough to repent. They will sin on through life, or at least live without God in the world, and then in the end as an atonement, they will be sorry for it, beg pardon of the Being whom they have offended, and drown themselves in the tears of penitence; going on the vulgar idea, that their habits and propensities and tastes will change with their desires and their wishes, and that religion consists in a series of emotions and feelings which may be had at the latest hour, instead of fixed habits, settled dispositions, voluntary preferences; not considering too, that if they have lived in opposition to God's will and their own convictions of duty *here*, there can be no reason why they should not persevere in the same course, and prefer it too, if God should permit them to live again and afford them further opportunities of improvement. This is an awful consideration to him who

dies without established habits of virtue, without a reigning desire to obey God, namely, that he may experience the same dislike of such habits hereafter as now, and then, supposing it to go on so, what shall become of him?

Pity is it that we cannot bring ourselves to believe, what is so fatally true, that we shall feel the same indisposition to be virtuous and deny our lusts to-morrow that we feel to-day, and the succeeding day as to-morrow, and ten years hence as now. It is ever to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow, or, on my next birth day, or, the beginning of the next year; and when those days come, there is the same backwardness in the soul to do this great and pressing work, and it is again deferred. "Now is the accepted time and the day of salvation." The true Christian knows not of to-morrow. He does not acknowledge it in his calendar of time. It is the grave of holy resolves and good purposes, the doomsday of the soul, and he abjures it.

Let us not count on to-morrow, nor rely upon its opportunities. Its offers, like those of a false friend, are fair, exceeding fair; but they are treacherous, and will fail us in our need. The work of religion, if it ever begin, begins to day—never on the morrow.

Jos. Allen

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ON

CHRISTIAN SALVATION.

BY

BERNARD WHITMAN.

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CHRISTIAN SALVATION.

What must I do to be saved?—Acts, xvi. 30.

Can a more important question be asked by sinful mortals? Do we not all admit its importance, when we feel the compunctions of an accusing conscience? when we reflect on our deep depravity of heart and life? and when we consider our capacities for eternal suffering or enjoyment? Do we not acknowledge its importance, when we witness the awful ravages of wickedness, in destroying whatever is dignified in humanity; whatever is useful in character; whatever is improving in social intercourse; whatever is productive of happiness in domestic life, and whatever can give peace and hope in the hour of death? Are we not sensible of its importance, when we behold the Son of the living God laboring, teaching, suffering and dying to redeem us from iniquity and wretchedness? Are we not convinced of its importance, when we contemplate the infinite love of our heavenly Father, in sending his well beloved Son to rescue us from our degradation; in giving to him his holy spirit without measure, and in qualifying him to become the Saviour of the world? Let me then invite your attention to the infinitely important subject of christian salvation.

I. What, then, is christian salvation? It is deliverance from ignorance, error and sin; and the possession of christian knowledge, virtue and piety. Perhaps I can render this definition more clear by a familiar example. Suppose then that a learned heathen now stood before me; one who worshipped idols; one who had heard of Jesus, and believed him to be an impostor; one whose conduct was openly immoral. I undertake to convert him to Christianity by rational argument and evangelical motives. I first convince him of the existence of one infinite Creator, Governor and Father. You perceive that he would then be saved from his ignorance concerning the nature and perfections of the Supreme Being; as well as from the folly and darkness of idolatry. I next convince him that Jesus of Nazareth is the divinely commissioned Saviour of the world. You perceive that he would then be saved from his erroneous opinions respecting the one Mediator between God and men; as well as from an evil heart of unbelief. I further convince him that if he would be a true Christian, he must obey the instructions, imitate the example and imbibe the spirit of the great Author and Finisher of our faith. When his actions give evidence of a reformation of heart and life, you perceive that he would be saved from his iniquities; as well as blessed with a righteous and holy character. When these things are accomplished, you must admit that he has experienced christian salvation.

Now from this illustration, you may learn four most important gospel truths. First, that christian salvation consists in deliverance from ignorance, error and sin; and in the possession of christian knowledge, virtue and piety. Secondly, that this salvation takes place whenever

a person becomes a practical Christian. Thirdly, that so long as any one continues a practical Christian, he is in no danger of punishment. And fourthly, that divine pardon can be obtained only by forming a christian character. The truth of these four propositions, I will now endeavor to prove, from reason, observation, and the Scriptures.

1. I am first to prove that christian salvation consists in deliverance from ignorance, error and sin; and in the possession of christian knowledge, virtue and piety. Look then to the scriptural argument. Why was our Saviour called Jesus? 'Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins.' Why did he appear on earth? 'The son of man is come to save that which was lost;' lost in darkness, doubt and depravity. Why did he commission Paul to visit the gentiles? 'To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.' Why did he give himself a ransom for sinners? 'To redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' And who are the subjects of his saving power? 'He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.' If then a person is turned from heathenism, to the service of the living God; if he is redeemed from his iniquities, and rendered zealous of the good works of the gospel; he is surely saved from his religious blindness and iniquity, and possessed of christian instruction and holiness. Many more passages of a similar import might be quoted, but these are sufficient to prove the truth of the first proposition.

2. I am secondly to prove that this salvation takes place whenever a person becomes a practical Christian.

Look again at the argument from revelation. What did Jesus say to the penitent female who anointed his feet at the house of Simon the Pharisee? 'Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.' *Hath saved thee;* not will save thee at some future period; but, hath even now secured thy salvation. His miraculous powers enabled him to know that her repentance was sincere, that her reformation was commenced, and that her belief in his divine mission would influence her to strive for christian perfection. What is the exhortation of Paul to his beloved Timothy? 'Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God, who hath saved us.' *Hath saved us;* not will hereafter confer salvation; but hath already saved us, by aiding us in becoming obedient disciples of Christ Jesus. What is his testimony concerning God in his letter to Titus? 'According to his mercy he saved us.' *He saved us.* If he had before saved them, their salvation could not be an event of futurity. The same apostle makes these explicit declarations to his converts. 'We are saved by hope.' 'By grace ye are saved.' *Are saved!* In both cases the salvation was then experienced. This meaning is more strongly expressed in the original. The literal translation is this—we *were* saved by hope; by grace ye *were* saved. Thus no doubt remains that he spoke of an event already passed. Take one example from the epistle of Peter. 'The like figure whereunto even baptism doth now save us.' *Doth now save us!* This ordinance was then leading them to the acquisition of christian knowledge, virtue and piety; and thus saving them from ignorance, error and sin. If then our Saviour pronounced his disciples saved, as soon as they cordially embraced his religion; and if the inspired

apostles declared that their reformed converts, as well as themselves, had already experienced salvation; surely christian salvation takes place whenever a person becomes a practical Christian. Many similar passages might be produced, but these are sufficient to prove the truth of the second proposition.

3. I am thirdly to prove that so long as any one continues a practical Christian, he is in no danger of punishment. He will not indeed be saved from temporal afflictions, as were many of them who attended upon our Lord's personal ministry; but these are not to be considered punishments. Still the words save, saved, salvation and Saviour are frequently used in the scriptures in reference to these evils. From such trials, the sincere Christian is now delivered only so far as his cheerful resignation raises him above their influence. But he is in no danger of suffering that misery which is the natural consequence of sin. For there is a hell only for the impenitent and disobedient; and what is called the wrath of God abides only on those who are his enemies by their wicked works. And there is no future condemnation to those who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. For what does Paul say to his Roman converts? 'God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, *being now justified* by his blood, we *shall be saved* from *wrath* through him. For if, when we were enemies, *we were reconciled* to God through the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, *we shall be saved* by his life." Here you perceive that two kinds of salvation are mentioned. The first was deliverance from sin, which they had already experienced; the second would be deliver-

ance from wrath, or the natural consequence of sin, in a future world, which would take place hereafter. For if they remained holy, no torment would await their entrance upon another existence. Paul's only fear on this subject was, lest any should abandon the christian character, and become so wicked as to incur future punishment. And although an inspired apostle, he manifests his sense of the danger, even in regard to himself; for he has written this passage. 'But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached unto others, *I myself should be a castaway.*' A few other passages might be adduced to prove that the practical Christian has nothing to fear but sin; but enough has been said to prove the truth of the third proposition.

4. I am fourthly to prove, that divine pardon can be obtained only by the formation of a christian character. And what is divine pardon? Nothing more nor less than deliverance from the power and punishment of sin; and the possession and enjoyment of holiness. And can the sinner secure this without reformation and improvement? Look once more to the law and the testimony. What are the words of Isaiah? 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' This is perfectly plain. If the depraved forsakes his depravity, he escapes its punishment. What are the words of Jeremiah? 'It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them, that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and sin.' This is equally plain. The house

of Judah could obtain forgiveness only by forsaking their iniquities. And what was our Saviour's commission to his apostles? 'That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name.' And what is repentance, but forsaking wickedness and acquiring holiness? and what is the remission of sins, but deliverance from their power and punishment? And what was the exhortation of Peter? 'Repent and be converted.' Why? 'That your sins may be blotted out.' You perceive that pardon and reformation are inseparable. Whoever forsakes any sin, that sin is immediately pardoned; and until a sin is forsaken, it cannot be forgiven. This is the current language of revelation. A host of texts might be produced in proof of this assertion; but sufficient have been quoted to prove the truth of the fourth proposition.

But I will not trust to scriptural evidence alone. I appeal to your observation. Take the man of intemperance. You perceive that his unlawful indulgence causes immediate pain, and not unfrequently sickness. The seeds of various diseases soon take deep root, and undermine the constitution; the balance of temper is destroyed; the tender sympathies of the soul are perverted; the benevolent affections of the heart are brutalized; the moral powers are rendered insensible to good impressions; the intellectual faculties are enervated and shattered; property is dissipated; family and friends are disgraced; and the order of social life is disturbed. Add to all this, his distressing reflections on the past; his inefficient and broken resolutions of the present; his dismal forebodings of the future, and what earthly punishment more severe need be imagined? And how is he to obtain pardon for this sin? Suppose God should audibly pronounce his

forgiveness from heaven; would this insure his happiness, so long as he continued intemperate? No. It would be of no service whatever for him to know that he was pardoned in the mind of his heavenly Father, so long as his punishment was not removed. He can secure enjoyment only by reformation. So it is with every sin of heart and life. We may pray for forgiveness, and appeal to the divine mercy; but unless we endeavour to forsake our iniquities, we only prove ourselves hypocrites. The husbandman may as well expect a harvest, without any cultivation of the soil. No. All such expectations are irrational and unscriptural. God is indeed sufficiently merciful. He is infinite love. He is a perfect Father of all his children. But no change takes place in his character when our sins are pardoned. The reformation must be in ourselves. And although we were already pardoned in his mind, we could not escape from the punishment of a single sin, until it was forsaken. Consequently, we can obtain the divine pardon only by forming a christian character.

But will not the punishment frequently continue after the sin is forsaken? Will reformation restore to the man of intemperance, his impaired constitution, his wasted estate, his lost confidence, and his self-approbation? Surely not. The consequences of sin must remain long after it is forsaken; perhaps forever. And for this there can be no immediate pardon; because so long as we remain the same persons, whether in time or eternity, our memories must remind us of our past transgressions. Do you suppose that Judas can ever forget that he betrayed his Master? And whenever this base act of treachery occurs to his mind, must it not fill his soul with the

most excruciating anguish? Yes. Sin is the same to the soul that poison is to the body. Take poison, and you injure or destroy your health. Commit sin, and you injure or destroy your soul's happiness. Expel the poison, and you regain your health; although your constitution will be injured in proportion to the quantity taken, and the time it is retained in the system. Forsake sin, and you regain your happiness; although your soul will be injured in proportion to the degree and duration of your depravity; and you must be forever the worse for the sins committed. Until you expel the poison, you cannot regain your health. Until you forsake your sin, you cannot escape its punishment, nor experience divine pardon, nor obtain christian salvation. I must conclude, therefore, that the four propositions are proved true, from reason, observation, and scripture.

II. By whom are we saved? By our heavenly Father. He is the original fountain of all our salvation. He saves us from temporal inconveniences and calamities, inasmuch as he provides the means for our daily support and enjoyment. He saves us from sin and its consequences, inasmuch as he furnishes the means of our moral and religious improvement and happiness. Consequently, he is our supreme Saviour. The truth of this proposition I will now prove from reason and scripture.

1. Reason teaches us that our heavenly Father is our supreme Saviour. How so? Because he is the original author of our lives, and all things in existence. And for what purpose has he given us being? To increase his own felicity? Surely not. For he is the perfect, independent Creator; and consequently, his happiness could

neither be increased nor diminished. He must therefore have created us solely for our own enjoyment; because he is infinite love. This is also evident from our very constitution, and our unnumbered blessings. Now if this be the fact, and if he has implanted within us an unceasing craving for some higher good; and if he has furnished us with various capacities for sensitive and rational happiness; and if he has placed us in a scene of constant danger and want, does it not follow from the very attributes of his nature, that he will furnish the necessary means for the gratification of our innocent desires, and for our protection from the various evils to which we are exposed? Not only so. If he has subjected us to continual temptation; and if he has encouraged an insatiable longing for future existence, is it not clear from the very perfections of his character, that he will provide the means of escape from iniquity, and open before us the portals of immortality, and furnish us with opportunities for the perfection of our spiritual nature? Should an earthly parent leave his dependent child to perish, either by accident, or cruelty, or starvation, should you not pronounce him an inhuman monster? How infinitely more cruel and unnatural would it be for the perfect, supreme Creator of the universe to forsake the children of his affection, and neglect to make provision for their animal and spiritual wants. But this is impossible. For a perfect God must necessarily be unchangeable in his character. And if love prompted him to create intelligent offspring, that same affection must ever dispose him to regard them with tenderness; and to be their eternal Benefactor, Preserver, Father, and Saviour. And universal experience has thus far declared, that the Lord is good to all, and

that his tender mercies are over all the works of his hands; and consequently, he must remain the universal and supreme Saviour.

2. Revelation also teaches us that our heavenly Father is our supreme Saviour. Turn to the scriptures, and you will perceive that he is represented as the original source of all temporal salvation. You will find this decisive declaration in the book of Isaiah. 'I, even I, am the Lord; and besides me there is no Saviour.' You may find a similar expression in the book of Hosea. 'Yet I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no God but me; for there is no Saviour besides me.' Notwithstanding these positive assertions, you learn that this only Saviour employs agents to effect the various purposes of temporal protection and preservation. Look again to the writings of Isaiah. 'For they shall cry unto the Lord because of their oppressors, and he shall send them a Saviour, a great one, and he shall deliver them.' And in Nehemiah you find this passage. 'In the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven, and according to thy manifold mercies, thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hands of their enemies.' Now these texts prove most satisfactorily, that although there is no Saviour besides Jehovah; yet that he frequently raised up and qualified other saviours, to redeem his chosen people from temporal calamities. The same kindness he continues to manifest towards us. For he is now, as ever, the original source of all our means of support, comfort, and improvement. By the various gifts of his providence, he now saves us from hunger and nakedness, from slavery and oppression, from war and pestilence, from ignorance

and crime, from sickness and death. And he freely gives us, through a variety of second causes, all our talents, privileges, blessings, and hopes. 'For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; and in him we all live, and move, and have our being.'

3. Revelation likewise instructs us that our heavenly Father is our supreme Saviour in spiritual concerns. You find this declaration in Paul's first epistle to Timothy. 'This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.' Now this refers to the salvation of the soul from sin and wretchedness; and expresses very clearly the desire of our Father to have all his children embrace the gospel and reap its rich rewards. In the same epistle, you find another passage equally explicit. 'We trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.' This needs no explanation. Not only so. The beloved disciple thus affirms. 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.' This fully proves that we are solely indebted to our Father for the unspeakable gift of a spiritual Saviour; and for all the means of moral renovation and improvement. This is confirmed by Paul. 'All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.' In another place, he uses this language. 'But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward men appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.' You perceive that God and his Son are both

called Saviours in the same verse. But you also notice that it is expressly asserted, that God had saved them by Christ Jesus. The one was the author of salvation, and the other the instrument. Many more passages of the same import might be quoted ; but these are sufficient to prove that our heavenly Father is our supreme Saviour. Yes ; he is the original fountain of all temporal and spiritual salvation, as I have fairly proved from reason and scripture.

III. By what means does our heavenly Father effect our christian salvation ? By certain instruments, principles and motives. The most important of these I will now describe.

1. Our heavenly Father saves us through the instrumentality of Christ Jesus. He brought him into being, commissioned him to be a Saviour of all who would come unto him, and qualified him for the successful execution of his divine office. These truths are plainly taught in various parts of the unerring scriptures. Turn to the book of Acts, and you hear the inspired apostles addressing their brethren in these words. 'Then Peter and the other apostles answered—We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree ; him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins.' You here learn that the God of the Jews had brought Jesus into existence, and qualified him to be an instrument of their salvation. Take another passage from the letter of the beloved John. 'And we have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.' You here perceive that our Father sent

his Son to be a Saviour, not merely for the Jews, but for all nations. More passages of the same character might be easily adduced; but these are amply sufficient to prove that our heavenly Father has created and commissioned Jesus of Nazareth to be an instrument of salvation to mankind.

But how is Christ Jesus an instrument for our salvation? Let Peter answer this question. 'God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.' So far then as he turns any one from his wickedness, so far he saves him from its punishment, and no farther; and he effects the salvation of sinners in no other way. But in what manner does he turn us from our sins? Let this question be answered by the experience of those already saved; by the best Christians of all denominations. Inquire what first induced them to become sincere disciples of Jesus, and you will receive a variety of replies. You will find that some have been early and successfully trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and gradually drawn into the paths of holiness, by the pure morality of the gospel; while others have been converted more suddenly in maturer years, by the great discoveries of Christianity. You will find that some have been excited to consideration and amendment, by the example of Jesus; while others have been influenced to obedience, by his benevolent labors and stupendous miracles. You will find that some have been stimulated to exertion in the christian life, by his glorious promises of a heavenly reward; while others have been savingly alarmed, by the awful threatenings of future punishment. You will find that some have been melted to contrition by his agonizing sufferings; while others have bowed their stubborn wills

before the majesty of his cross. From these and similar confessions, you must conclude that Jesus saves us from our iniquities, by his life and labors; by his example and instructions; by his consolations and discoveries; by his promises and threatenings, and by his sufferings and death. And what is proved true by actual experience, you find confirmed by the clearest declarations of scripture. For spiritual salvation is there ascribed to these various causes; sometimes to one, sometimes to another, and sometimes to all combined. The whole process is therefore perfectly plain and intelligible. Jesus exerts no mysterious or miraculous influence over our souls. So far as he induces us to become good, so far he is instrumental in our salvation, and no farther; for we are not now saved, and we shall never be saved, any farther than we become holy. This is expressly declared by our Saviour himself. 'Not every one that saith unto me—Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.' The writer to the Hebrews is equally decided. 'Christ Jesus became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.' Consequently, those who continue disobedient are not partakers of his salvation.

2. Our heavenly Father saves us through the instrumentality of his holy word. This truth is likewise plainly taught in scripture. What is the exhortation of James to his readers? 'Receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls.' You find the following petition in one of our Saviour's last prayers. 'Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.' Paul addresses his beloved Timothy in these words. 'From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures,

which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.' And Peter addresses his converts as already saved by this instrument. 'See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently; being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.' These passages are sufficient to prove that the scriptures of truth are a divinely appointed instrument of salvation; and that they contain the necessary efficacy to accomplish this glorious purpose.

But how does the bible effect our salvation? By warning us of our moral dangers, furnishing remedies for our spiritual diseases, and providing instruction in relation to our immortal interests. For we are assured that 'all scripture, given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.' Let me then illustrate this position by a familiar example. Give a navigator an accurate chart of some dangerous coast; let it exhibit a perfect delineation of all rocks, shoals, and quicksands; let the course of safety be described with equal fidelity and plainness. Now if he follow the right directions, his chart will be instrumental in the salvation of himself, his crew and his vessel; but if he proceed in a contrary path, his neglect will expose him to all the calamities of shipwreck. So with the bible. Put it into the hands of an intelligent child of God, and he will readily perceive that it discloses the moral dangers to which he is exposed, and that it discovers a sure and safe way to holiness and heaven. He will feel conscious of freedom and ability, either to disregard its admonitions, or to comply with its requisitions. Now if he follow its instructions, he will assuredly

be saved from ignorance, vice and misery ; and rendered enlightened, virtuous and happy. But if he slight its warnings, despise its counsels and disobey its injunctions, he will as certainly experience the consequences of ignorance, error and sin. The bible is instrumental in effecting his salvation in the same way that a chart saves the mariner from shipwreck. The divine word contains the same efficacy now as at the period of its first promulgation. Whoever sincerely endeavors to make it the standard of his faith and practice, will inevitably secure salvation, although he should be deprived of the privilege of hearing the preached gospel. But no one should be so foolish as to suppose this holy book possesses any mysterious or miraculous charm. No. You may cover every shelf in your house with bibles ; you may place them under every pillow ; you may even bind them to every heart ; and if you use them in no other way, you may as well expect salvation from your almanac. No. The bible will do you no good, unless you study its pages, and understand its contents, and obey its instructions ; and then it will prove instrumental in your salvation just so far as it makes you wiser, better and holier, and no farther.

3. Our heavenly Father saves us through the influence of his holy spirit. This fact is plainly taught in the gospel. Look into the writings of Paul. To the Philippians he saith —'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' To the Thessalonians he saith— 'God hath chosen you to salvation through the sanctification of the spirit.' And again, 'God hath also given unto us his holy spirit.' To the Romans, speaking of the gentiles, he saith—'Being sanctified by the holy ghost.'

And to Titus, he saith,—'God saved us by the renewing of the holy ghost.' More passages of a similar import might be readily quoted, but these satisfactorily prove that our heavenly Father saves us through the influence of his holy spirit.

But how does the spirit of God effect our salvation? Let an inspired apostle answer this question. 'The spirit also helpeth our infirmities.' But how is this help communicated? In a supernatural manner? Does it give us the power of working miracles, and of speaking unknown languages? No. It was so imparted to the apostles and some of their first Jewish and Gentile converts; so as to convince them more deeply of the truth of Christianity, and aid them more effectually in its propagation. But we have no good evidence that any believers have received this special influence of the spirit since the apostolic age. — Is it communicated in an irresistible manner? Does it compel us to become Christians? No. For this would destroy our accountableness, and directly contradict the scriptures. These commands are plainly given. 'Quench not the spirit.' 'Grieve not the holy spirit of God.' And this charge was boldly made to the Jews; 'Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the holy ghost.' If they had power to withstand its influence, we must surely possess the same power, for human nature in this respect remains unchanged. — Is it communicated in an arbitrary manner? Is it bestowed without any conditions? No. It is promised to those, and those only, who ask, seek, and knock for its assistance. 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the

holy spirit to them that ask him.' 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.' 'Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.' Our Father is ever ready to help all who help themselves; and as he has promised aid to none others, those who neglect the means of grace, must not expect any peculiar assistance. — Is it communicated in a discernible manner? Can we distinguish its operations from the results of our own thoughts, feelings, affections and imaginations? No. For if we could, we should realize as much of a miracle as any wrought by our Saviour; and we all believe the day of miracles to be past. And to prevent this pernicious error, our divine Master has given us a very explicit caution. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the spirit.' — Is it communicated in a uniform manner? Does it assist all persons in the same way, and at any one particular period? No. For then we could determine the mode and time of operation. But experience furnishes no such result. And an inspired apostle assures us, that there 'are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.' If the help of the spirit is communicated in none of these ways, how is it imparted? Neither revelation nor experience furnishes an answer to this question. We must therefore rest satisfied with knowing that we are assisted by the holy spirit in our exertions for salvation; and assisted in such a way as not to affect our free agency. We have a parallel case in the productions of nature. 'So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep and rise, night and

day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the ear bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.' If you see the ripened grain, you know that God has blessed the labors of the husbandman, although you cannot tell the time when, nor the manner how. So in religion. If you behold a person exhibiting love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, you know that his infirmities have received help from the holy spirit. And just so far as this influence produces these christian fruits, just so far it is instrumental in our salvation, and no farther.

4. Our heavenly Father saves us through the instrumentality of the christian ministry. Paul informs us that Christ Jesus 'gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.' He was himself an apostle of this number; and he acquaints us with some of the measures of his ministry. 'To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.' He also gives an exhortation to Timothy on this subject. 'Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.' He likewise declared that it 'pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.' These texts plainly prove that the christian ministry is an appointed means of spiritual salvation; and that faithful ministers are instruments in the hand of God for the conversion of sinners.

But how does the minister of Christ effect our salva-

tion ? By inducing us to forsake and avoid sin ; to acquire and maintain holiness. And by what means does he accomplish these objects ? Ask those pious believers who readily ascribe their salvation to the instrumentality of their pastors. They will frankly confess, that their attention was first awakened to the claims of religion, by some rational, affecting, or persuasive discourse. Or they will freely admit, that they were first excited to duty, by the conversation of their religious teacher, either in public or private, either at the bed of sickness, in the hour of death, or at the house of affliction. There are others indeed in almost every society, who will not acknowledge that they have received any perceptible benefit from the christian ministry. But is there not reason to believe, that they have been imperceptibly deterred from many vain thoughts and sinful desires, from many unkind remarks and cruel accusations, from many vicious practices and wicked habits, by hearing the weekly sound of the everlasting gospel ? Is there not reason to believe, that they have also been excited, in the same way, to cherish good feelings, to cultivate amiable dispositions, to exhibit benevolent sympathies, and to perform righteous actions ? You can judge fairly of the saving effects of preaching, only by comparing the intellectual and moral state of a whole congregation, where no christian instructions have lately been dispensed, with one which has long enjoyed the blessings of religious institutions. Whenever this is done candidly, you will be convinced, that the constant warnings against wickedness, the continual recommendations of righteousness, the unceasing proclamation of the love of God and the claims of Christ,

and the ever ascending spiritual devotion, have a direct and powerful tendency to elevate the tone of moral feeling and character. And the principal reason that more apparent good is not effected, must be found in the hearers. The apostle fully confirms the truth of this assertion. 'For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them; but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.' This must ever be the case so long as men are free agents. Their improvement from preaching must depend on their own exertions, in connection with the promised blessing. Yes; you may attend church on every returning sabbath; you may have the most eloquent preacher in christendom; you may hear the whole counsel of God declared from week to week and from year to year; and unless you listen to the truths of religion, and bring them home to your minds and consciences, and strive to reduce them to practice, you can reap but little benefit from the christian ministry; for this instrument will save you just so far as it makes you good, and no farther.

5. Our heavenly Father saves us through the instrumentality of the events of his providence. These are of two kinds, joyous and grievous. Both are wisely designed to lead his intelligent children to consideration and obedience. This is clearly taught in various passages of scripture. Listen to the words of Paul. 'Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?' Hear also the declaration of the Almighty. 'In their affliction they will seek me early!' In accordance with this is the testimony of David. 'Be-

fore I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.' And the consolation of the Hebrew converts is equally to the point. 'Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.' These texts fully prove that the prosperous and afflictive events of providence are an instrument of christian salvation.

But how do the events of providence effect our salvation? By leading us to self-examination, and self-improvement. Prosperity is admirably adapted to excite our gratitude to our heavenly Benefactor, and encourage unreserved obedience to his holy laws. No doubt many may be found in every religious denomination, on whom the goodness of God has exerted its saving influence. But I fear the pleasing events of life have corrupted a still larger number, and rendered them more thoughtless and worldly minded, more covetous and depraved. On the other hand, adversity has produced an abundant harvest of holiness. The afflictive events of providence have probably awakened the attention of more persons to the concerns of religion, than any other cause whatever. You find some in almost every church who were first moved to commence the work of salvation, by some disappointment, desertion or suffering; by the loss either of health, or friends, or property. But affliction has not uniformly produced holy fruits. Many have been hardened by their trials, and made more depraved and wretched. This must continue to be the case so long as we remain free agents. Our Father designs our best good in all the events of his providence. We have power, either to improve them to our salvation, or to misimprove them to our condemna-

tion. Our interest, our duty, and our happiness coincide. Let no one then be so simple as to think he shall be always sure of happiness, without personal holiness, because he now receives a large share of temporal blessings. For unless he faithfully improves all his talents, they will hereafter swell the fountain of his misery. Neither let any one believe that he is sure of future felicity, simply because he is afflicted while on earth. No. You may see every hope of your soul blasted; you may be deserted by every mortal friend; you may be tormented with every bodily disease; you may be stripped of every earthly comfort; and if your trials render you more peevish, repining and rebellious, they will assuredly increase your guilt, your wretchedness and your condemnation. Unless they serve to wean your affections from earthly vanities; unless they raise your thoughts to the unseen realities of eternity; unless they lead you to self-scrutiny, self-discipline and self-cultivation, they cannot promote your christian salvation. For this instrument will save you just so far as it makes you holy, and no farther.

6. Our heavenly Father saves us through the influence of faith. A belief in the Messiahship of Jesus leads to christian salvation. You find this truth plainly taught on almost every page of the gospel. What was the answer of Peter to the question of the jailer? 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.' How did our Saviour close his commission to his apostles? 'He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.' Listen also to the declaration of Paul. 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe

in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.' A multitude of similar passages might be quoted; but these satisfactorily prove, that faith in Jesus is a principle of christian salvation.

But how does faith effect our salvation? By influencing our thoughts, motives and conduct in the ways of truth, virtue and piety. It operates in the same manner as our belief in many other facts. Much of our daily conduct is the result of faith, and not of certain knowledge. Take an example. You may find a man of learning, who was comparatively ignorant when he arrived at years of maturity. His advantages of instruction had been few and defective. But he believed that important and valuable literary acquisitions might be made by attention to study. He accordingly procured the necessary books, employed the requisite instructers, and devoted to the pursuit of knowledge a sufficient portion of time and thought. And what is the result? A good education. This is therefore the effect of his belief; for it was his faith which first excited him to commence a literary course, and stimulated him to persevere to the accomplishment of his wishes. Now faith in the anointed Jesus operates in precisely the same manner. A person becomes rationally convinced that he is the divinely commissioned Saviour of sinners. He therefore receives all his instructions as eternal truth. These assure him that salvation can be obtained only by obedience to the divine commands. He accordingly makes the necessary exertion for the acquisition of a christian character. This is the natural result of his belief. His faith in Jesus therefore influences him to obedience, and secures his deliverance from iniquity, and his possession of holiness. And

in this process, there is nothing more mysterious than in the faith of the student.

But are there not two kinds of faith? Certainly; the one speculative, and the other practical; the one living, and the other dead; the one of the head, and the other of the heart; for 'with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.' And you may frequently see both kinds exemplified in the concerns of this world. Take an example. You behold two persons strongly tempted to engage in gambling. You assure them, that if they follow this pernicious practice, they will sooner or later lose their property, ruin their character and disgrace their friends. You adduce sufficient evidence to convince them of the truth of your assertions. Now the faith of one is practical, and influences him to resist the temptation, and thus saves him from severe punishment. The faith of the other is speculative, and while he professes to believe in the ruinous consequences of the forbidden vice, permits him to engage and continue in its fascinations and fatal allurements. So in religion. The great majority in civilized lands profess to believe in the christian religion. A part only are influenced by their faith to conform to its requisitions. The remainder act in direct opposition to their profession, because their belief is merely speculative. So far, therefore, as a person's faith induces him to obey the christian commands, so far it is instrumental in his salvation, and no farther. And a belief in any particular doctrine or set of opinions is of no further value to any person, than it contributes to his goodness or happiness. For no one will ever be judged by the articles of his creed, but by the fruits of his faith, 'the deeds done in the body.' Consequently no faith is effectual to salvation,

except that 'which works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world.'

7. Our heavenly Father saves us through the influence of hope. This is expressly asserted by an inspired apostle. 'We are saved by hope.' He here refers to the hope of present and future happiness, which is the natural and certain consequence of personal holiness. For in another place, he makes this declaration; 'Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' And Peter gives thanks for the heavenly inheritance reserved for the righteous. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope,—to an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.' More passages of a similar nature might be easily quoted; but these clearly prove that the hope of present and future reward is a principle of christian salvation.

But how does hope effect our salvation? By influencing us to become the obedient followers of Jesus. For John informs us, 'that every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as Christ is pure.' Many of our temporal affairs are regulated by this very principle. Take an example. Why does the husbandman prepare the soil, sow the seed, and cultivate the growing plant? Does he surely know that success will crown his exertions? No. The mere hope of a harvest is the moving cause of his labors. So in religion. A person really desires to obtain present and future happiness; he is convinced, from reason, and observation, and scripture, that nothing but christian obedience can secure these bless-

ings. His hope therefore influences his conduct, and causes him to comply with the prescribed conditions of salvation. So far then as his moral goodness is the result of his christian hope, so far is this principle instrumental in his salvation, and no farther. And there is nothing more incomprehensible in its operation, than in the hope of the husbandman.

But are there not two kinds of hope? Certainly; the one living, and influencing the conduct; and the other dead, and exerting no salutary influence. An illustration of both kinds may be readily furnished from real life. Two persons are equally desirous of obtaining a fortune. The hope of one is a living principle, and influences him to rise early, and retire late, and 'eat the bread of carefulness;' and thus enables him to secure the object of his wishes. The hope of the other is inoperative, and permits him to remain inactive, unenterprising, and perhaps imprudent; and thus naturally disappoints his desires. So in spiritual concerns. All persons wish for present and future happiness. A part only are influenced by their hope to make the necessary exertions for the acquisition of christian virtue. The remainder continue more or less negligent and disobedient; and consequently secure but a small portion even of earthly enjoyment, and leave the world with a very imperfect preparation for heavenly felicity. Now for a person to hope for salvation, while neglecting the christian duties, is more absurd, than for a pauper to expect riches, while confined to the almshouse. And for him to expect present and future happiness, while walking in the paths of open wickedness, is infinitely more absurd, than for the person who cannot

swim, to hope for salvation from drowning, while he continues plunging further and deeper into the bosom of the ocean. Just so far, therefore, as our hope of happiness influences us to become good, just so far is this principle instrumental in our salvation, and no farther. And this living hope is the only one which will not make us ashamed.

8. Our heavenly Father saves us through the influence of fear. This is taught by the precepts and example of our Saviour and his apostles. Jude requires different classes of sinners to be treated in various methods; and then adds this injunction; 'Others save with fear.' A fear of the natural and certain consequences of sin deters from its commission. The inspired preachers frequently appealed to this principle. Listen to the words of Jesus. 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.' Take also an example from Paul. 'And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come, Felix trembled.' 'God will render unto every man according to his deeds; to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil.' These passages are sufficient to prove that our Saviour and his apostles appealed to the fears of their hearers; and that fear is a principle of christian salvation.

But how does fear effect our christian salvation? By deterring us from wickedness. We are daily influenced by this principle in the regulation of our own conduct,

and in our government of those under our protection. Take a family of children. Some of them may be persuaded to filial obedience, by kind and generous motives; while others can be moved to duty only by the fear of punishment. So in the christian world. Present religion to the attention of men, and some are induced by the purest principles of action to commence and continue the work of reformation and improvement; while others seem hardened against every tender and affecting consideration. You may persuade and entreat them to embrace the gospel by the friendship and sufferings and death of a crucified Saviour; by the mercy and love and blessings of a heavenly Father; by all that is dear and desirable on earth and in heaven; and you produce little or no effect. You must depict the bitter fruits of sin, and describe the torments of the damned, and arouse their fears of hell, before you can start the tears of penitence. Inquire into the experience of many good Christians, in almost every denomination, and you will learn that the fear of misery first induced them to begin the work of salvation. Had not the terrors of the Lord been proclaimed, they might have continued impenitent even to the present hour, and perhaps become hardened profligates. But commencing the work of religion in fear, the very lowest principle of human nature, they gradually learned to love God for his goodness, and to serve him for the rewards of holiness. So far, therefore, as the fear of punishment influences us to forsake and avoid sin, so far it is instrumental in our salvation, and no farther.

But does not fear operate in different ways? Certainly. You may see this illustrated in temporal concerns. Be-

hold a vessel in a dangerous storm. The fear of shipwreck nerves one mariner with double courage and strength; and enables him to make wonderful exertions for self-preservation. A second is wholly unmanned, becomes faint and sick, and is perhaps left a prey to despair. So in the concerns of the soul. The fear of punishment influences one to persevere in a sober, righteous and godly life. A second is wholly unnerved, driven to despair, perhaps deprived of the use of his reasoning powers, and even abandoned to self-destruction. But when this takes place, we may be assured that his fears have not been excited by the terrors of the Lord. For Jesus and his apostles certainly declared the whole counsel of God; sinners were as depraved then as now; and we have no account of any such occurrence under their preaching. We cannot do better than imitate their example, and make sinners fear nothing so much as the natural and lasting consequences of their sins.

Perhaps you will now ask, if we are not saved by our good works? Whatever may be said as to our being saved by them, it is certain that we cannot be saved without them; for they are the only scriptural evidence of a christian character, as well as the chief method of forming it. This is the reason that they are so emphatically insisted upon by our Saviour and his apostles. Perhaps there is no other subject, on which they have said so much and so earnestly; because, if not holiness itself, they are the manifestations of holiness, and considered in connexion with their motives, the elements of it. If the fruit be bad, you pronounce the tree corrupt. If the stream be bitter, you call the fountain impure. If the

outward actions be vicious, you declare the heart depraved. For the same reason, if the conduct be virtuous, you consider the soul to be holy. Hence you see the infinite importance of good works; for without them there can be no evidence of christian holiness; and consequently no ground to hope for salvation. In this conclusion, the sacred writers wonderfully harmonize. I know, indeed, that some persons have supposed Paul and James at variance on this point. But this is the mistake of ignorance. Paul asserts that a Christian is saved without works of law. By works of law, he means the Jewish rites and ceremonies; circumcision, sacrifices, fasting, washing of hands, paying tithes, and the like. And surely these cannot aid a believer in Jesus in forsaking his iniquities. He also declares that a man is justified by faith alone. By faith, he intends that living, operative principle, which is as sure to yield good fruits, as the sun is to send forth light and heat. And it is this faith which saves the believer; but good works are the only evidence of the existence of such a principle. Now James was probably writing to those who had perverted the meaning of Paul; and he insists that a man cannot be saved without works. By works, he means the fruits of love to God and man, holiness of heart and life; and he proves his proposition so clearly, that no one ought to mistake his conclusion. The real sentiments, then, of both apostles, are in perfect harmony with the instructions of their divine Master. The substance of the whole matter, therefore, is manifestly this. Just so far as a person obeys Jesus, just so far will he bring forth good works; and just so far as he exhibits good works, just so far is he a

practical Christian; and just so far as he is a practical Christian, just so far is he saved, and no farther.

One most important consideration remains to be mentioned. It is this. We are saved by the grace of God. Yes. To the free grace of our heavenly Father are we indebted for all the means of our salvation. And what is free grace? Let me give an imperfect illustration by an example. Suppose an earthly monarch should make a feast, and cordially invite all his subjects to come and partake freely. He receives nothing in return for his entertainment; and consequently it is the gift of his grace or favor. If any of the invited guests refuse to attend, the fault is wholly their own; and for their loss of the pleasure, they can justly blame none but themselves. So it is with our heavenly Father. He wishes all his children to be happy. He knows they can be happy only by being good. He has accordingly furnished all the means necessary for securing their goodness. And it is solely of his free grace, that he sent his Son Jesus, gave him miraculous powers, and qualified him to be the spiritual Saviour of mankind. It is solely of his free grace, that he raised the crucified Lord of glory from the dead, exhibited him to competent witnesses, qualified his apostles to publish the history of a divine revelation, and preserved the gospel unimpaired to the present times. It is solely of his free grace, that he now invites us all to come to the fountain of truth and be cleansed from our moral pollution, that he offers the assistance of his holy spirit to all who seek for it in sincerity, and that he aids us in forming christian characters. For all these unspeakable blessings, we can make him no returns; for he is a per-

fect being, and cannot be benefited by the services of his imperfect children. If we refuse to improve these means to our own progress in holiness, we shall not be saved; but we can blame no one but ourselves; for we are all invited to approach the table of spiritual bread and water. We all have ability to comply with the invitation. We are all encouraged by the most animating motives. And we are assured there can be no other way of becoming happy, but by using our own powers in the acquisition of holiness. Although salvation is of free grace, it can be experienced only by those who cultivate christian knowledge, virtue, and piety.

IV. Thus have I endeavored to answer the three important questions — What is christian salvation? By whom are we saved? And by what means is our salvation effected? The answers returned naturally suggest several important reflections.

1. From what has been said, we learn the grand design of our Saviour's mission and death. We learn that he labored, taught, suffered and died, to save us from our sins, and to assist us in acquiring a holy character, so that we might here enjoy the happiness for which we were created, and be qualified for heavenly felicity hereafter. And he would accomplish this plan of infinite mercy, by inducing us to fulfil the various duties of our several relations. Now we are related to our Creator; for we are dependent on his favor for our existence and faculties, for our preservation and support, for our blessings and hopes. Consequently we are bound, by the very laws of our rational and moral nature, to submit to his authority as our Governor, to render him gratitude as our Benefac-

tor, to trust in him as our unchangeable Friend, to love him as our Father, and to worship him as our God; and if we fulfil these obligations, our piety yields us the purest felicity. But if we banish our Maker from our thoughts, profane his sacred name and institutions, murmur at his allotments, and violate his commands, our sinfulness produces aggravated misery.—We are also related to our fellow men; for they are also children of our common parent; possessed of the same powers, privileges and rights; and exposed to similar temptations, trials and afflictions. Consequently we are bound to love them as ourselves, to exert ourselves to promote their best welfare, and ever to do unto them in all things as we would have them do unto us; and if we fulfil these obligations, our benevolence gives us substantial happiness. But if we knowingly injure their property, influence, feelings, reputation or character, our wickedness will be attended with certain wretchedness.—We are likewise blessed with the union of animal and spiritual capacities. Consequently we are bound to restrain the propensities, principles and affections of our constitution within the prescribed limits of conscience, reason and revelation; and if we fulfil these obligations, our self-government secures rational enjoyment. But if we give unlawful indulgence to our appetites, desires, passions, and imaginations, our transgression is followed by loss and suffering. Such then are the iniquities from which our Saviour came to redeem us, because they naturally produce severe misery; and such are the good works of which he would make us zealous, because they insure pure and permanent happiness. Consequently the grand design of his mission and death is, to induce us to fulfil the various duties of our several rela-

tions, so that we may avoid the punishment of sin, and obtain the rewards of holiness, both for time and eternity; and thus glorify our Father in heaven.

2. From what has been said, we also learn the great object of the christian ministry. We learn that this object is, to aid in fulfilling our Saviour's mission and death. Consequently the minister of Christ will habitually endeavor to persuade his hearers to forsake and avoid sin, and to acquire and exhibit holiness. And to effect this important purpose, he will clearly explain to them the nature of sin; and make them feel that it punishes the sinner, even in this world, by subjecting him, either to loss of health, property and reputation; or to the suspicion and contempt of his fellow men; or to the severe compunctions of an accusing conscience, or to the excruciating agonies of a miserable death. He will also explain the nature of holiness; and make them perceive that it rewards the obedient disciple even in this world, by securing the approbation of his own mind; the esteem of the wise and virtuous; the means of usefulness and respectability, and the necessary preparation for the time of trouble, and the season of affliction, and the hour of dissolution. He will likewise lay before them the claims of Jesus; his untiring services and disinterested sacrifices; his spotless example and heavenly spirit; his divine instructions and cruel sufferings; his ignominious death and triumphant resurrection; and he will entreat them, by all that is tender and affecting in his whole history, to become his sincere disciples. He will further present to their consideration the paternal character of their Father in heaven; the unmerited blessings with which he crowns their days; the surpassing love which prompted him to send his

Son to be their Saviour; the manifold consolations he has furnished for their sufferings and afflictions; the unfading inheritance which he has provided for their eternal residence; and he will beseech them, by all that is interesting and moving in his dispensations and perfections, to become 'lovers of God as dear children.' And finally, he will strive to bring forward all the moral influences of our holy religion. He will not 'shun to declare the whole counsel of the Lord.' Especially, he will not fail to keep them in remembrance of the righteous retributions of eternity—that great doctrine of Christianity, which its heavenly Founder so plainly taught in this solemn declaration; 'The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.' And to their moral and religious improvement, he will cheerfully devote all his time and talents, all his thoughts and exertions; nay—he will not 'count his life dear unto himself, so that he may finish his course with joy, and fulfil' the holy purposes of 'the ministry which he has received from the Lord Jesus.'

3. From what has been said, we likewise learn the chief duty of hearers. It is, to aid the minister in accomplishing the merciful design of our Saviour's mission and death. Let me then address all such in the words of inspiration. 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.' Your duty is plain. 'Keep the commandments.' 'Cease to do evil, and learn to do well.' Ever avoid what you know to be wrong. Always practise what you believe to be right. Regularly attend upon the services of the sanctuary. Prepare yourselves to be edi-

fied by all its exercises. Feelingly engage in the public devotions. Listen candidly to all evangelical instructions. Bring home to your own consciences everything applicable to your wants. Carry much of the spirit of the sabbath into the week. Frequently scrutinize your whole character. Attentively compare the habitual state of your thoughts, motives, feelings, affections, conversation and conduct with the divine standard. Speedily reform whatever you discover amiss in your hearts or lives. Quickly supply whatever you find defective in your faith or practice. Confirm and strengthen whatever you possess according to truth and godliness. And never imagine that you have arrived at perfection; but forgetting your past acquirements, press forward most zealously to higher and still higher degrees of christian knowledge and holiness. And be not discouraged at opposing obstacles. For your work is not only so plain, that the fool cannot honestly err therein; but it is so practicable, that no excuse of inability will ever be admitted at the bar of conscience or heaven. Your Father remembers that you are dust, and he does not require impossibilities of his frail children. Bring to your aid, therefore, all the motives of the blessed gospel. Keep in mind the glorious rewards which await those who persevere unto the end, and the awful punishments threatened upon the disobedient. Place the perfect example of your divine Master ever before you. Recollect that the same apostle who commands you to work out your salvation, also assures you, that 'God worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.' Remember that a greater than Paul declares for your encouragement, that 'your heavenly Father is more ready to give you his holy spirit, than earthly parents are to

give good gifts to their children.' If then you seek spiritual influences in sincerity and truth; if you labor in the work of moral improvement with untiring perseverance; if you continue in the plain paths of gospel salvation; you will aid your minister in accomplishing the great object of his ministry; and your exertions will be crowned with present and everlasting salvation.

4. From what has been said, we further learn to determine whether we ourselves, and those around us, have experienced christian salvation. If we adhere to the direction of our Saviour, we shall find no difficulty on this question. For if we are sober, chaste, meek and humble, we are surely saved from intemperance, impurity, anger and pride. If we are just, candid, forgiving and benevolent, we are certainly saved from dishonesty, bigotry, revenge and covetousness. If we love, serve and worship our heavenly Father, we are undoubtedly saved from impiety, ingratitude and disobedience. If we imitate the example, imbibe the spirit, and obey the instructions of Christ Jesus, we are indeed saved from unbelief, hypocrisy and condemnation. But on the other hand, if we slight his invitations, disregard his precepts, and contemn his authority, we manifestly do not possess christian knowledge, virtue and piety. And so also, if we wish to know whether any particular neighbor or acquaintance is a subject of gospel salvation, we need not inquire into the length or soundness of his religious creed; for if his faith influences him to forsake iniquity and acquire holiness, it answers for him all the purposes of salvation; but if it does not produce these results, be it called heterodox, or orthodox, it is no better to him 'than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.' We need not inquire to

what denomination of believers he belongs; for if his heart is pure and his habits virtuous, his salvation is already accomplished; but if this be not the case, the name of his sect will work no miracles for him at death, and he will be accounted as nothing at the bar of heaven. We need not inquire what his religious experiences have been; for if he exhibit the christian character, no other evidence is needed; but if he cannot furnish this scriptural proof of election, all the experiences in creation are of no service whatever. We need not inquire if he has been born again; for unless we see the marks of the new birth in his temper and conduct, all the professions in the world should give no satisfaction; but with this evidence, all other testimony is unnecessary and superfluous. We have an inspired rule by which to measure his moral condition. 'By their fruits shall ye know them.' The moral and religious character is the only standard of salvation furnished by our appointed judge. And let the sectarian creed of our friend be what it may; let him belong to what denomination he pleases; let him relate what experiences he can; let him make what professions he chooses; all these are nothing in the account. For so far as he commits sin, so far will his sin punish him; and so far as he acquires holiness, so far will his holiness reward him. He will, therefore, enjoy just so much of heaven as he possesses of moral goodness, and no more; and he will suffer just so much of hell as he possesses of moral depravity, and no more. Consequently, he is saved just so far as he is holy, and no farther; and he is damned just so far as he is sinful, and no farther. This is true in life; it is true in death; and it must be true in eternity

5. From what has been said, we finally learn that innocence or reformation is the only method of escaping the punishment of sin. We may indeed commit sin with the expectation of avoiding its consequences. We may employ the darkness of night, and the secrecy of the grave, to conceal our iniquity. And for a time we may elude the detection of our fellow mortals. But when we are least aware, some event may occur, some circumstance may arise, which shall reveal our infamy and our disgrace to the world.—We may commit sin; we may conceal it from every human being but ourselves; our labors may be crowned with success; the voice of gladness may be heard in our dwellings; the world may lay her riches and her honors at our feet. But with all that time has to offer, we shall still be miserable. For our wickedness will have left a corroding disease on our very soul. And we shall carry a hell in our own bosom which no earthly offerings can ever quench or smother.—We may commit sin; we may affirm that all actions are alike; we may ridicule religion, and scoff at all sacred things; we may plunge into the very vortex of dissipation, and pass along the briery road of transgression, until arrested by the summons of death. But his cold hand will dissipate all the mists of infidelity and depravity. A knowledge of our desperate wickedness will fill our souls with agony; and convulsive cries for mercy will tremble on our quivering lips.—We may commit sin; we may sear our consciences so as to pass even the portal of the grave in our delusion. But when the light of eternity bursts upon our guilty souls, we shall come to a knowledge of ourselves; our wilful disobedience, our sinful pollution, our

wretched condition. And a sense, a realizing sense, of our lost and ruined state, must fill our souls with 'indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.' How can we then escape the natural consequences of our profligate course? Can we then flee from our own thoughts? Can we then desert our own reflections? Can we then escape from our own souls? Can we then hide from the inspection of an omniscient and omnipresent God? Oh no. There is no escape from misery but in innocence or reformation. It is not in the power of Jesus to deliver us from the punishment of sin in any other way. He came not to make us happy in our iniquities. This he could not do. This God himself will not do. He must first aid us in becoming good, before we can possibly be happy. Sin and unhappiness are eternally inseparable. As well may we expect to unite heaven and hell, as hope to make a depraved soul happy in any way but by reformation. Let me therefore beseech all who are guilty,—and who is not? let me entreat you, as you value your present and eternal salvation, to forsake and avoid sin, to acquire and exhibit holiness. For 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord.'

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GENIUS

OF

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THE

GENIUS OF CHRISTIANITY.

When Christianity was first preached, it produced a very great sensation. Whole cities were thrown into an uproar at its appearance, and it was said of its first preachers that they were turning the world upside down. Christianity was not therefore at the first, quietly established, but it was introduced into the minds of its first converts amidst great public commotions. The feelings of the first Christians must have partaken fully of that excited tone imparted to every community in which the voice of our Religion was first heard.

That the least heed should be given, under these circumstances, to the humble affairs of daily duty, to the common and natural obligations of life is the last thing to have been expected. We should certainly never think to have found such an one as the Apostle Paul with his way of life and his habits of mind, paying any sort of attention to the ordinary offices of life. But we have only to look into his epistles, those writings from which we obtain the best idea of the feelings and opinions of the Christians of that period, and we shall find that never for a single instant did Christianity permit her converts to lose sight of the common relations of nature and society. Take, for instance, the two epistles to the Thessalonians.

At Thessalonica, Paul had preached Christianity at the imminent hazard of his life, and was near being torn in pieces by a mob. Upon his escape from that city, so soon as he found opportunity, he wrote to the small company of disciples he had collected there. And what is the style of this incorrigible disturber of the public peace? He beseeches his brethren to continue studiously in the quiet performance of their usual duties, giving us to understand that this had been the tenor of his instructions from the first. Listen to his own words. "We beseech you that ye study to be quiet and to do your own business and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without." Again in the second of Ephesians. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us, for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you, neither did we eat any man's bread for naught; but wrought with labor and travail that we might not be chargeable to any of you, not because we have not power but to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread."

In this earnest and explicit manner, the Apostle sought to impress upon his brethren the importance of

quietness, regularity and good order. Consider what the character of St Paul was. He was a man of ardent temperament—of great sensibility, and the circumstances into which he had been all along thrown, were such as to encourage and confirm the peculiarities of his original constitution. With a warm and zealous mind, his life had been one uninterrupted scene of excitement. His feelings had been early aroused by the rise of a sect who appeared to him to throw contempt upon his most sacred convictions—upon the religion of his country and his ancestors. And when we recollect the extraordinary means employed by Heaven to bring him to be the most devoted defender of the persecuted faith of Christ, we can hardly conceive how the balance of his mind, with all its awakened sensibilities, was preserved. Follow him in his course as an apostle of Christianity. He journeyed from city to city, over land and over sea, filled with the idea of a great change to be wrought in the world. His mind must have been thronged day and night with the most exciting images. And wherever he appeared, wherever his voice was heard, an extraordinary sensation was produced. Infuriated mobs were collected. He was rescued by military force, carried before magistrates, thrown into prison, beaten, stoned, left for dead, driven from place to place, and confronted with kings. Habituated to such scenes, could his mind descend with any sort of interest to the common realities, and familiar details of daily duty? In fine, is it not worthy of remark, does it not give us a noble idea of Christianity, to find her at the stormiest periods, inculcating in a clear and calm voice the homely duties of common life, directing men to be quiet, orderly, to pursue their usual

occupations peaceably? While she was aiming at a great moral revolution, the greatest that can be imagined, and when the human mind must have boiled and foamed around her, like a vexed sea, she partook not of the general excitement, but showed her superiority to it, and did not permit the attention of men to be carried away, as it was naturally and strongly inclined to be, from the present and usual sphere of human duty. She did not allow the eternal lines which mark the natural obligations of man, to be hidden by the flood of feeling that she had called forth.

It is indeed a very singular, a most admirable trait in our holy religion, that while it proposes the greatest objects, deals in the sublimest truths, unfolds the largest views of the moral government of the world, and of the obligations and destiny of man, it takes proper and faithful cognizance of the every day matters of human life. It invests man with new and lofty relations, throws around him an unearthly light, teaches him to consider himself as a celestial intelligence, the offspring of an Infinite Being—eternity his duration, the universe his home. At the same time it does not allow him to forget—it reminds him in a tone clear and forcible, that he is a member of the human family, bound by the common obligations, engaged in the daily labors, perhaps in the lowest manual occupations of human life. The splendors of its revelations, concentrated as they were, were not allowed to obscure, they were made to illuminate the humble sphere of present duty. Christianity is a system at once the most comprehensive and the most simple. While it points to a boundless future, the contemplation of which excites and ravishes the soul, it gives to the present its

due importance, and does not permit us to disregard the claims that are near, however familiar they may be. This, I conceive to be the beauty, the spirit, the *genius* of our religion. While it animates us at the prospect of what we are to become hereafter, it adapts itself perfectly to man as he is here.

We perceive this beautiful characteristic of Christianity, particularly as it was exhibited in the first days of our religion, tempering the spirit of the apostles, which everything was conspiring to excite, making it a duty among the new converts, that they should give regular attention to business, live quietly, and perform faithfully the duties of their several vocations. It was not simply the novelty of their situation and their new views and feelings, that were calculated to create a disgust at their old occupations, to render them indisposed to the dull course of their ordinary labors. They might very naturally have conceived, that when the harvest was so great, and the laborers were so few, it was their duty to relinquish their customary pursuits, and to devote themselves to the great work of reformation which had commenced in the world. Plausible as this course must have appeared, when I consider that they did not adopt it; or if they were so inclined, that the apostle, by express injunction,* commanded them to remain, each in the station, no matter how humble and laborious, in which the new religion found him, Christianity receives my profoundest admiration, and I feel that a system so exalting, so calculated, I may say, to excite emotions amounting to rapture, and at the same time so calm, sober and judicious, could not have had a human origin — could not certainly have

* See particularly 1 Cor. vii. 10—22 inclusive.

been introduced by any human means, at that period at which Christianity first appeared. In the perfection of its morality, I perceive the impress of a divine hand.

Lest it should be conceived that I have attached a false value to that characteristic of the religion of the New Testament upon which I have now dwelt, and which I hold to be a genuine token of divinity, I proceed to show that it is not merely in connexion with the times of the apostles, that the peculiar excellence of Christianity is visible. There are many other respects in which it is apparent that we owe particular reverence to Christianity, for the important influence it aims to exert upon man in his most familiar duties, in the common routine of life.

1. In the first place, let it be observed that this trait in the religion of the New Testament is, strictly speaking, peculiar to it — that it belongs in no similar degree to any other system. Compare Christianity with any other religion, in the attention which it bestows upon man's daily conduct, in the fidelity with which it accompanies him down among his most ordinary occupations, and in his usual intercourse with the world, and you will find that it is the spirit of all other religions and of all those false forms which Christianity itself has been made to assume, to make only occasional and partial requisitions of human service — to leave men to themselves, except upon particular days, and with regard to particular exercises. In fact, religion, except under the liberal dispensation of pure Christianity, is a thing by itself, detached from all the concerns of life, consisting of certain observances very imposing perhaps, in the repetition of certain words, in the profession of certain formulas, or in the achievement

of great and separate acts of self-denial or charity. It is altogether peculiar to our religion, according to a liberal construction of it, that it dignifies the whole life, with all its parts, public and private, social and domestic, with the name of religious duty. It teaches us, that in our daily intercourse with one another, in the humblest details, in every matter of conduct, there is a way of acting and feeling, which when a man pursues, he is entitled to the appellation of a religious man, a Christian. It assures us that a religious spirit can be expressed by a quiet and industrious attention to business, as significantly as by a prayer and a solemn rite. In the vocabulary of every other system, religion signifies something separate, sacred, apart; but to the practised ear of an enlightened Christian, it conveys a very different, a much larger meaning. It is but another word for the whole life, with all its business quietly and regularly performed, all its pleasures moderately enjoyed, all its evils patiently borne. It is the general cultivation and happy and constant exercise of one's nature in all those ways in which it was intended to be exercised. It is the healthy putting forth of the affections around their natural objects. It is the enlargement of the character, until it is made to fill all the parts of human duty.

2. If you would have still further evidence how entirely peculiar it is to uncorrupt Christianity, to place the whole life, with all its occurrences, within the sphere of religious obligation, compare the christian system in this respect with the general sentiment of mankind, and see how vastly superior it is. It is the general disposition to make great account of great acts. Our moral judgments are determined by the manner in which men act upon great occasions, and we are apt to place religious

excellence altogether in the performance of striking deeds, and little is thought of the general tenor of a man's life. We can scarcely help thinking well of an individual, if we only know that he is zealous about religious forms, or that he has occasionally done some great act of generosity. Men attach little or no religious value to that form of character which may be exhibited under the common relations of society. If the most that you can say of a man is, that he is a faithful son, or an affectionate brother, or that he is inflexibly upright in his calling — this may be all very well — but it proves nothing in the general mind, as to his possession of the temper and character of a Christian.

Nothing illustrates the general feeling on this point more strikingly than the effect commonly produced upon people's minds in seasons of great religious excitement, when men are more than ordinarily impressed. Then what a disgust is created at that domestic, household religion, that excellence which may be won and exhibited in the common walks of life! How does the excited mind nauseate a humble calling, pant to quit its lowly station, and undertake the office of a spiritual leader. If a want of the requisite qualifications, if the sex of the individual preclude the possession of official weight, still the domestic circle will be deserted, the foot will be turned away from the familiar paths of life, and such exercises will be engaged in, as best accord with the enlivened sensibilities of the mind. The high labors of devotion and exhortation, will be undertaken upon occasions and in places which have all the excitement of publicity without the name.

Thus when men are taking the deepest interest in religion, they only show how superior the moral tone of

Christianity is to their best moral sentiments. The generality of believers have not yet come up to the spiritual import of their religion. The christian system, properly viewed, makes account of our every-day feelings, of manners even, of our social intercourse, of our domestic habits, and attaches to them a religious value, and brings them into the estimate of the character. And if men were really christianised in their sentiments, every revival of religion would be marked by an increased tenderness of conscience, not with regard to devotional acts only — the outward forms and signs of religion, but to the daily conduct and the natural obligations of human life.

3. In further illustration of our subject, let us observe how perfectly Christianity, in our view of the representations which it makes of human duty, coincides with some of the plainest dictates of reason, some of the clearest conclusions of common sense.

Where we are, we are stationed by our Creator. And from the exquisite wisdom displayed in all his arrangements, the inference is that our duty is *here*, that our chief labor is to be performed in that portion of his vineyard which he has assigned us. And if we look immediately around us, we may find enough to do. Are we children? Then have we parents to honor and comfort. Are we parents? Then have we a great work to do; to rear minds, the depths of whose resources, and the splendor of whose expectations, transcend our loftiest conceptions. But it is unnecessary to enumerate all the relations in which nature places us. From all of them spring duties. All furnish abundant occupations to our hearts and hands. As then it is the dictate of reason, that the ser-

vice of human life lies among its domestic, social and civil relations, so we cannot fail to honor Christianity, when we find her corroborating this dictate, and pointing to the very same sphere of duty.

4. Again, we infer that our principal duty is close to us, within our personal circle; not only because we find ourselves where we are through the overruling wisdom of God, and have employment enough provided for us in our ordinary duties, but also because it is apparent that, by filling his own place, one may do something for the benefit of the whole family of man. What a host of good influences would be sent through the world, if every individual were to perform the duties of his own station, no matter how obscure, to the utmost of his ability. What a lively effect is produced by a bright example of diligence, integrity, and common kindness, upon those who come within its attraction! The young man, just entering upon active life, looks up to him who has won his admiration by his undeviating uprightness and unfaltering perseverance, and his ambition is, to resemble him whom he respects so profoundly. The family, in which good order and good will preside — how lovely it is! and how is every man prompted to arrange his own household upon the same beautiful plan. In a similar way, the beneficial influence that is propagated from individual to individual, and from family to family, spreads from community to community, and from nation to nation. The effect which a country like ours, with its free institutions, has, and is destined to have, upon the general condition of the world, is obviously beyond all estimate. The longer our political prosperity lasts and the more firmly it is consolidated, the more impatient will the

rest of mankind become of the numerous and unnecessary drawbacks upon their liberties and their peace. Let one free and happy community exist, and what can withstand the stirring charm of its example? As the connexion between the individual and his race is thus disclosed, the simple religion of Jesus must appear beautiful and true, when we observe how it aims to make every man fill the place assigned him by Providence, to the best of his ability.

5. But in order to see still more clearly that every man's main duty in life lies among those, among whom nature has placed him, suppose yourself for a moment detached from all your present connexions, lifted out of the place you occupy, and carried up to some eminence, where the whole world — the whole field of moral exertion, might be spread out before you. Suppose also, that you were then required to select the scene of your labors — the spot upon which you might endeavor to act upon mankind with the best prospect of success. Now as a man can always exert upon those whose modes of thinking, feeling and speaking, whose habits of life, are in unison with his own, a much readier and surer influence than upon those who are separated from him by foreign ways of thought and action, you would be compelled to return, for the sphere of your efforts, to the very place from which, by the supposition, you had just been withdrawn, for there alone, in your natural circle, would you be surrounded by those whose sympathies and habits are in the closest accordance with your own. In the communication of moral and intellectual good, there is need of some community of thought and feeling between those who give and those who receive. There can be but little intercourse that is

profitable between those who are separated from each other in all their modes of mental association and of conduct. Our principal duty, therefore, is among those to whom we are most nearly assimilated in all these respects. And with whom do we, generally speaking, most closely sympathise, but with those of our own kindred and tongue, with those who have been subjected to the same influences that have contributed to the formation of our own tastes and habits? Now all this cannot fail to magnify our blessed religion — to increase our reverence for it, when we find its spirit thus identical with the clear and sacred voices of reason and nature.

6. There is yet another consideration, which, by showing that we are to be first and habitually devoted to those who are nearest to us, helps to illustrate the lovely spirit of pure religion; and we cannot omit it. It is a remarkable fact, that while any single instance of distress occurring in our own neighborhood, excites the liveliest sensation, a most extensive and awful calamity taking place in a distant region of the earth, scarcely awakens the most transient emotion. We are bereft of our composure, and overwhelmed with pity, at the sight of an individual suffering before us; but the tidings of some vast city, in a distant portion of the world, laid in ruins by fire, or laid waste by the plague, may arrive, and scarcely one thrill of compassion vibrates through our hearts. Why is this so? Some may ascribe it to the perversity of our nature; but it admits of an interpretation far more honorable to the Creator. If we were affected by suffering in direct proportion to its amount, whether it were near us, where we might relieve it, or at a distance, where it would be beyond the reach of our kind offices, we should be abso-

lutely unfitted for the necessary business of life. We should be in a state of perpetual excitement, and pass our lives in the deepest affliction. Scarcely could we assemble for any social purposes, before some melancholy intelligence would arrive, and send us to our homes weeping and heart-broken. The wisdom of God has arranged things differently. The misery which is near us, and which it is within our ability to relieve, we are made to feel intensely. But it would have been diffusing suffering to a needless extent, if we had been made to be deeply affected by those calamities, which, in proportion as they are removed from us, it is out of our power to alleviate. It is true, that as our benevolent affections are cultivated, they range through a wider and ever enlarging circle. But then they never can be cultivated, their growth is never healthy, unless they are first and principally fostered at home, and towards those whom Providence has thrown within the reach of our influence. Our sympathies may be powerfully swayed by the imagination, and driven across seas and deserts; but as a general truth, they are powerfully affected by what is near, and but feebly touched by what is remote. This being our constitution, the inference admirably accords with the spirit of the gospel, which teaches us that we do our duty best when we are uniformly faithful to our natural and common relations.

7. The genius of liberal Christianity advances another claim upon our regard, when we observe how perfectly it consults human comfort in the cognizance which it takes of the daily feelings and habits — of those dispositions of mind, which do not attract public observation. 'It is not' it has been observed by another 'with gross acts of

vice, or with splendid virtue, that our religion is mainly conversant. This is not its true spirit. It descends even to that turn of sentiment which fashions the deportment of man to man.' It would preside in the daily interchanges of domestic life, and incite to a thousand little 'endearing cares and engaging attentions.' It would teach us to be considerate, and to cheer all around us with 'glad words and kind looks.' In so doing it takes a humble sphere, but it accumulates an untold amount of happiness. Great deeds of benevolence, great acts of generosity, no doubt produce a great deal of joy, and make many hearts light, but 'a humane consideration, a rational and habitual indulgence for others, evinced by an uninterrupted sweetness of manner,' does more, infinitely more, for the substantial and abiding comfort of human life. The causes of great happiness or misery are only occasional. It is the little occurrences of every day, which, considered in themselves, may appear insignificant, that go to make up the amount of human enjoyment or misery. It is very seldom that you have an opportunity of saving the life of a fellow creature; but every day you may make some little contribution to the happiness of those with whom you associate, either by a kind word, or an encouraging smile. You are not often called upon to submit to a great injury, or to forgive a determined enemy; but almost every hour of every day, some little forbearance is to be practised, some little petulance of temper to be pardoned. Christianity therefore, in taking into her jurisdiction the usual course of human feeling and conduct, is full of benevolent wisdom, and shows herself acquainted with the wants of man. What an enormous waste may be made of the great sum of happi-

ness, by the indulgence of a fretful, uncomplying temper *at home!* It may ruin the peace of a whole family, and drive the husband and father to the forgetfulness of excess. It is no common excellence in Christianity, that its object is the diffusion of a peaceable, quiet, proper spirit through the ordinary relations of society.

8. That religion is commonly thought to prefer the best claim to our faith, whose requisitions betray no weak indulgence, but are rigid and unbending — difficult to be complied with. Upon this principle, Christianity, in the fidelity of its moral bearings, manifests a decided superiority. Great acts of virtue, of self-denial, or of penance, are deemed the most praiseworthy, and the religion that requires them is considered the most excellent, because such acts are supposed to be the most difficult. But the excellence of the gospel is as discernible in the lowly sphere in which she aims to operate, as in the higher walks of virtue. The intelligent observer will perceive, that there is really more moral energy, and of course, more true greatness displayed, in the ordinary virtues, in the quiet and unostentatious exercise, for instance, of common kindness, than in any of those sacrifices or in any of those great deeds, which are so dazzling, and which we are very much assisted to perform by the prospect of an immediate reward in the applause they will command. It is, indeed, comparatively easy, to make those great sacrifices which are only occasional. Many a man will hazard his life for another, — perform an extraordinary act of beneficence — watch with incessant care and admirable patience over the sick bed of one whom he loves; but where, where under heaven, shall we find the individual, who preserves a cheerful tone of feeling,

a gentle manner, undisturbed amidst all the little causes of vexation that arise even in the intercourse of the most devoted of friends ? Where is the abode around which the magic of domestic affection has been strong enough to keep off every evil shape of suspicion and unkindness ? I know that hitherto the world has attached no religious worth to these humble and daily exercises of the social affections of which I speak ; but I believe that they form the last accomplishment of the truly religious man. They are the last and brightest of those ornaments in which he becomes completely adorned in this world, and which remind us that he is prepared for another. When you see a man invariably kind in his temper, acting with perfect propriety in all the *minutiæ* of life, with a heart so gentle as to accommodate itself at once and exactly to the happiness of those around him, you have the surest evidence that he has imbibed the divine spirit of Christianity. The tree is loaded and is bending with fruit. If a celestial light were illuminating his person, you would not have better proof that he is a child of God, a friend of Jesus, and an heir of heaven.

9. There is a striking and beautiful correspondence between this trait of our religion, upon which I have now dwelt, and the external creation. The same mode of divine wisdom is discernible, in the natural, and in the spiritual world. We find the universe around us constructed upon the largest scale, to effect the grandest purposes, and at the same time a delicate care is bestowed upon its minutest parts and its humblest operations. The shower which fertilizes hill and valley, sends its invisible influence into every branch and bud, through the fibres of the smallest plant. The law which guides the planets

in their paths, reaches to every atom. The light which bathes the hemisphere in glory, is fitted to the organs of the meanest insect. So is it found to be in the moral world, as that has been displayed to us in the true light of Christianity. The sublimest objects are revealed to us. The doors of the spiritual universe have been flung open before us. A firmament of moral glory is unrolled over our heads, at the sight of which, an irrepressible longing after unknown good, a *moral passion* is awakened within us. At the same time, tender heed is given to our natural affections, and a careful provision is made for their ordinary exercise. They are not swallowed up, lost and forgotten, in the glory that has been revealed, but they are called out, and actively and continually employed.

10. We began with observing, that when the Apostles first preached the religion of their Master, a great sensation was produced. This remark may need to be guarded. It may possibly be inferred from it, notwithstanding the general tenor of these pages, that Christianity is of an *exciting* nature. Whereas its spirit is peace. It is true that great public disturbances attended its introduction. But this was owing to the state of the human mind — to the ignorance and prejudices of men. Our Saviour foresaw the consequences of the collision between his peaceful doctrines and the interests and passions of the world, and he said, ' Think you that I have come to bring peace on earth, nay, but a sword.' Every one perceives that he adopted this striking mode of expression, not because peace was not his great message, but to show in an impressive manner how sure and inevitable were the commotions by which the first steps of Christ-

ianity would be accompanied. So certain was it that discord and confusion would ensue, that our Lord spoke of these things as if they were the objects of his mission. Still, unavoidable as some degree of violence was under the circumstances of the times, it was accidental and temporary. And no one can doubt that the main design of our religion is to produce tranquillity and public order, and that sobriety, quietness and regularity are the natural fruits of Christianity. The legacy of its blessed Founder was *peace*. It sought to operate on the human mind, not by extravagance and excitement, but in a gentle and gradual manner. Its coming in the soul is not with a sudden blaze and with imposing circumstances, but it is like the silent and slow operations of the material creation. And here we may observe a still more striking analogy than that last mentioned, between our religion and the works of nature.

It is the object of all religions but the religion of the New Testament — it is the aim of many religious teachers at this day, — to startle men, to produce excitement and turbulence in the mind. Now the design of the Creator, so far as it is manifest in the course of nature and providence, appears to be very different. He does not aim to excite us, but to keep us calm and composed. Only think how tremendous are the resources of his omnipotence, and then look around you and see how quietly he uses them. There are no dazzling and confounding displays of power, such as we may easily conceive him to make if he chose. On the contrary, every thing is done in the softest and stillest manner. It seems as if God, remembering that we are dust, and knowing how excitable a creature man is, took particular care not

to disturb and overthrow our minds. In an instant he might make such an exhibition of his power as would drive man to insanity, and blast his intellect by an overwhelming sense of terror. The Almighty, so far from using any such means of impressing us, walks around us with noiseless step, and carries on the magnificent operations of nature slowly and silently, and seems to veil himself from us in mercy. The wheels of God's creation 'creak not harsh thunder' as they turn, but they roll on with a gentleness equalled only by the power that moves them. Christianity in our view accords most beautifully with the spirit of nature and providence. The ends at which it aims are sublime, how simple and gentle are the means! It would fashion man, this poor fabric of dust, to the glorious image of the Invisible God. But it erects no imposing apparatus to effect this object. It bids us cultivate faithfully our natural affections and discharge our plain duties quietly and without ostentation; and in this way, the wonderful process of spiritual creation is carried on and the human soul becomes a partaker of the divine nature.

I have thus endeavored, in various ways, to exhibit what I conceive to be the practical aim — the spirit of the New Testament, because there is ever such a strong disposition in the human mind, especially under deep religious impressions, to start away from the natural sphere of human duty, and to have its sense of moral obligation disturbed by false, imaginary, and profitless requisitions.

It is not intended to be denied, that occasions arise when we may go out of the usual routine of duty, with advantage. While Christianity bids us do good, espe-

cially to them who are of the household of faith, it bids us also do good to all, as we have opportunity. Opportunities offer when the hand of charity may be extended to a distant sufferer. Of such opportunities we should avail ourselves. But we earnestly protest, — and we believe that we do it in accordance with the genuine spirit of our religion — we earnestly protest against the sentiment so current, that these opportunities are the principal occasions upon which our benevolent affections are to be exercised — that they afford the chief room for our religious faith to show itself; as if the common course of life did not daily, hourly and momently, make demands upon our kindness, our patience, our integrity, in short, upon every quality that helps to constitute the christian character; as if the ordinary relations of the world did not furnish, for the display of every christian grace, a vastly better opportunity than can be afforded by occasional calls upon our sympathy made by great and distant objects.

If there were no other objection to this false sentiment, it would be enough, that it sets up a most injurious standard of character. He who is absorbed in striking schemes, is extolled to the skies on this account. What he is in common life, whether he is affable to those around him, merciful to the poor debtor, and honorable in all his transactions, are points which, if they are not wholly neglected, are deemed matters of inferior importance. On the other hand, he who withholds his countenance from the imposing movements made in behalf of some distant object, no matter how irreproachable his character in the common offices of the world, is regarded with coldness and distrust.

But we have a greater objection still to this prevalent mode of feeling. It is opposed to the whole spirit of the religion of Jesus. That spirit we have taken many words to illustrate; but if the world were only prepared to receive it, it might be described in a very few. *Charity and all the christian graces begin at home.* This maxim is, to be sure, in liberal use among those who are liberal in nothing else. Still it is true. And it is better that it should be sometimes perverted, than always forgotten. Yes, our virtues must take firm root at our firesides. They must tenderly overshadow our natural and familiar friends, and then extend themselves to all those with whom we have any dealings or intercourse. This is the proper growth of the inward man, when nurtured by the genius of Christianity. The costliest offering of religion is to be rendered in the sphere of one's personal influence. There the choicest sacrifice must be kindled, and watched day and night. If when thou comest to lay thy gift upon the altar of some public charity, thou remember that thy brother has aught against thee, leave there thy gift — but no, carry it back, and if it be possible, let it help to cancel what is due from thee to thy brother. It is idle for a man to profess to sympathise with the sorrows of his race, to engage with a proper feeling in plans of general benevolence, — he deceives himself, — if at the same time he is harsh, impatient, and unforgiving, toward that small portion of the human family, with which he comes into daily contact. And on the contrary, if he who is faithful to his common duties, whose kindness radiates through the whole circle of his personal influence, at the same time withhold his patronage from public schemes of benevolence, it is not for his brethren to che-

rish toward him any feeling but the most cordial respect. We cannot estimate the good which he is doing. So long as he discharges so faithfully his duty to those around him, which is his first duty, there is no room for anything but approbation.

There is nothing so beautiful as the pure and uncorrupt religion of Jesus Christ. Would you look upon its beauty, fill yourself with its quiet, gentle, and glad spirit, and in the still chambers of your own soul, God will make unto you a great revelation. Truth, in her own divine and eternal form, shall appear there. 'He who doeth God's will shall know the doctrine.' The tongue of an angel could not give you such a sense of its worth and glory, as you shall have, when it has thoroughly sanctified you.

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THE

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EARLY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

'A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.'—*Solomon.*

The advice given by Solomon, to 'train up a child in the way he should go,' points out to us the only way, in which any considerable advances can be made towards the extension of piety and morality. Those who have attained maturity, or arrived at old age, may indeed sometimes be improved; but, as it is always difficult to overcome prejudices and habits, every man who truly aims at the solid improvement of his species, will direct his efforts to that point, in which they are most likely to be successful. Where prejudices cannot exist — where evil habits cannot have been formed — where worldly maxims and pursuits have not had time to make inroads upon the integrity of the heart — this is the soil (the open, the ingenuous, the uncontaminated bosom of youth,) in which prudence and affection will sow the good seeds of religion and virtue, with the rational and delightful prospect of an abundant increase.

We, my fellow christians, look upon little children, not as the objects of God's wrath, but as the peculiar objects of his paternal affection. We do not, indeed,

consider them to be perfect; they have within them, the elements of future actions; of propensities and passions, of virtues and vices, which may raise them to honor, or sink them to degradation: but we view their hearts and their minds as subjects of moral culture; as soils, which we may wonderfully improve, and into which we may cast good seed; or, as fields, which we may permit to be overgrown with weeds, or even to be sown with tares by an enemy. In fact, we adopt the admirable and incontrovertible sentiment of John Locke, and look upon the infant heart and mind, 'as clean white sheets of paper,' upon which the characters of virtue may be traced by the hand of prudence, or those of vice imprinted by the hand of folly. Considerable difference, no doubt, sometimes exists between one child and another, (as there does in all other animals,) with regard to talents and constitutional temperament; but the wisest of men have maintained, and experience has fully proved, that the difference produced by nature is much less than that which is produced by education. Nature, with a benignant and impartial hand, has bestowed her gifts equally upon the savage and the civilized; yet, when we contemplate a barbarous horde, and turn again to a cultivated and christian community, we can scarcely trace the characters of the same species. And, even in civilized countries, the disparity between one man and another, between the unlettered peasant, for instance, and the accomplished philosopher, is truly astonishing; yet, the difference is not the work of nature. As to the ground-work and essentials of true greatness, it is very possible, that the clown may be, in reality, the superior man.

In fact, the general history of mankind, and the brief page of our own observation and experience, incontestibly prove, that men are almost entirely the creatures of education. Our knowledge, our tastes, our habits, our manners, our morals, nay, even our very religious opinions, principally depend upon it. There is no being in creation so little what nature formed it as man. If we look to any of the inferior animals, we find the same species almost exactly similar, on every part of the globe; but we never see two tribes or two nations of men alike; nor even two individuals of the very same country and society. Manners and customs, virtues and vices, knowledge and ignorance, principles and habits, are, with but little variation, transmitted from one generation to another; and, if we look for man in a state of nature, he is a being no where to be found. In every country, education and circumstances chiefly form his principles and habits ; and these almost invariably remain with him through life; so that he is much more permanently what he has become, than what he was created. The wise men and the fools, the saints and the sinners, the ornaments and the disgraces, the benefactors and the scourges of the world, are not the work of nature, but of man. I do most cordially agree with a sentiment which I have some where seen expressed, 'that nature never made a villain.' Constitutional temperament and mental powers may render some an easier prey to temptation and circumstances, than others ; but I do most firmly believe, that in almost every case, the natural energies and talents, which have carried unfortunate wretches onward to the commission of enormous crimes, would, if they had been

properly directed from childhood, have exalted them to eminence in virtue. The very same misguided ingenuity that has brought many a miserable malefactor to the gallows, might have raised him, under happier circumstances and better instruction, to fortune and to fame. Do we not find, indeed, in strict conformity with this position, that almost all the wretched beings, who forfeit their lives to the outraged laws of society, attribute their destruction to a neglected education, or to evil company in their earlier days? What an awful and important lesson is this circumstance calculated to teach parents, and, indeed, to all who have, in any way, the oversight and guidance of the young! A single folly encouraged, a single evil passion suffered to triumph, a single vicious habit permitted to take root, in what an awful catastrophe may it one day terminate!

It may not be unnecessary to state here, that by the word education, which I have already used, and which I shall have occasion frequently to use in this discourse, I do not mean merely, nor even principally, school learning; but, in the widest sense, everything which has a tendency to influence the mind, the principles, the temper, and the habits of the young. In this legitimate sense of the term, we are bound to consider the restraining of improper desires, and the encouragement of virtuous sentiments, to be a much more important part of education, than having children taught to read and write and cast accounts. This valuable species of moral instruction even the most illiterate parent is capable of bestowing, and has constant opportunities of bestowing; and, believe me, he or she, who omits this duty, will one day have bitter cause to lament such negligence.

The temper and dispositions of a child, upon which so much of the happiness or misery of life depends, are the earliest objects of watchfulness and interest; and every person, who has at all observed children, must be aware how exceedingly early these begin to develope themselves. In fact, they appear almost with the first smile, or the first tear; and it is quite astonishing, how soon the infant can read the expression of the countenance, and how soon it becomes sensible of praise or blame. Long before it can either utter or understand a single syllable, the little physiognomist can decipher the sentiments of the mind, in the features of the face. So wonderful is this almost instinctive perception of character, that, I think, I have never seen a child spontaneously extend its arms to a person who was decidedly cruel or ill natured. Even then, education may begin; nay, I am persuaded, ought to begin. I know that there is nothing more common with parents, and with others who have the care of children, than to laugh at violent bursts of bad temper, or instances of peevishness and selfishness: and this practice is usually palliated upon the weak supposition, that such feelings may be easily subdued as the child grows older; or, to use the vulgar phrase, 'when it gets more sense.' But, I firmly believe, that in nine cases out ten, the requisite portion of sense never comes; whilst the pernicious tendency and habit as certainly remain. This may appear a very trifling, perhaps undignified, or even ludicrous remark; but, from experience and observation, I am deeply convinced of its importance; well knowing, that nothing so materially tends to sweeten or to embitter the cup of human life as TEMPER.

A well regulated temper is not only an abundant source of personal enjoyment and general respect to its fortunate possessor, but also of serious advantage to others in all the social relations. I have seen the mother of a family, under its hallowed influence, moving in the domestic circle with a radiant countenance, and like the sun in the firmament, diffusing light and joy on all around her. I have seen her children artless and happy, her domestics respectful and contented, and her neighbors emulous in offices of courtesy and kindness. Above all, I have seen her husband returning, with a weary body and an anxious mind, from the harassing avocations of the world; but, the moment he set his foot upon his own threshold, and witnessed the smiling cheerfulness within, the cloud of care instantly passed away from his brow, and his heart beat lightly in his bosom, and he felt how much substantial happiness a single individual, in a comparatively humble station, may be enabled to dispense. Yet, how many scenes of a very different character are every day exhibited in the world, where the evils of poverty are augmented ten-fold by the miserable burthen of a peevish and repining spirit; and where the blessings of affluence seem only to supply their possessors with additional means of manifesting the extent of wretchedness, personal and social, which ill-regulated tempers are able to produce! Many a man, whose judgment is adequate to direct the destinies of nations, whose eloquence enraptures senates, and whose playful wit and vivid fancy render him the idol of the brilliant circles of fashion, is, nevertheless, totally unable to govern his own temper, and never enters his home, (that spot which, of all others upon earth,

should be peculiarly consecrated to gentleness and affection,) in any other character than that of a cold, gloomy and capricious tyrant. Let it be remembered, too, that the influence of temper is coextensive with society itself; and it will not appear a matter of trifling moment, to devise the best means of regulating and restraining a principle, so intimately associated with the general happiness of our species.

Next to the regulation of the temper, should come what may be termed the moral part of education; and this, I am persuaded, may also commence at a very early period of life. Children can distinguish between right and wrong much sooner than a superficial observer would imagine. Playthings are to them the same as property to men; and in the details of the nursery may be found a miniature representation of almost all the passions, that actuate society. Sentiments of honor, generosity, integrity, benevolence, and truth may all be cherished at a very early age; whilst meanness, selfishness, dishonesty, unkindness and falsehood may be as early and effectually restrained.

So fully am I convinced of the paramount importance of a minute and anxious attention to the very dawnings of reason and of passion, that I am convinced, if we knew the early history of the eminent men who have most adorned and benefited the world, we might trace back the stream of their usefulness and their fame to the nursery — to the pure fountain of maternal prudence and affection. I trust I shall not be accused of degrading either my character or my office, by the meanness of flattery, when I declare my firm persuasion, that in all the

social, friendly, and most estimable relations of life, in everything that tends to sweeten the cup of mortality, the influence of woman is inconceivably superior to that of man. But it is in the earliest and most important years of existence, that her influence is of unspeakable consequence. The first dawning of reason, the first stirring of passion, the first line of character, are marked by her eye. Her familiarity and affection remove all restraint, and she can distinctly perceive the very inmost workings of the heart and mind. 'From earliest dawn till latest eve,' her eye follows the beloved object of her hopes and fears; so that she enjoys constant opportunities of checking every symptom of folly, encouraging every appearance of virtue, and deducing lessons of improvement from every occurrence, and from every surrounding object. On the contrary, man, engaged in the turmoil of business, the cares of a profession, or any of the thousand harassing avocations of the world, returns home, rather to relax his mind, by indulging his little ones, than to search for imperfections, or to punish faults. His return is generally a little jubilee in the domestic circle, and it would be hard to act the part of a rigid censor; to cast a gloom over cheerful faces, or to freeze the current of enjoyment in happy hearts. Praise is always freely, if not always justly given; and the father of a family often knows less of the real dispositions and characters of his children, than the humblest domestic in his establishment.

If we look to the commencement of learning, it is upon the mother that task also must fall. Her patience, her perseverance, her affection, alone, are equal to sustain

the irksome drudgery of that weary season — irksome, even where nature has been most bountiful; but peculiarly harassing, where she has been sparing of her gifts. And then, in sickness, in all the various diseases incident to youth, who to sustain the heavy head, to administer the healing medicine, to watch the feverish slumber, to bear with all the untoward peevishness of youthful suffering — who, but that same unwearied friend, that kindest gift of Heaven — the Christian Mother?

Fully, therefore, am I convinced, that in the commencement of education, which gives direction to the whole of coming life, mothers have by far the more difficult and more important duties to perform. No young person (and I would to God that I could imprint this sentiment indelibly upon every youthful mind) can ever be sufficiently grateful to a good and a prudent mother; nor sufficiently thankful to a benignant Providence, if he have been blessed with such a parent. But, if such be the inestimable advantage of maternal affection regulated by prudence, and of maternal gentleness tempered by firmness, the evil accruing to children from a weak, a careless, or a wicked mother, is equally incalculable. Of all the calamities which could befal an unfortunate family, that of an indiscreet, negligent, criminal, irreligious mother, would seem to me the greatest. Hence, Solomon so emphatically observes — 'A child left to himself bringeth' (not his father but) 'his mother to shame.' His misconduct reflects peculiar disgrace upon that parent, who, from her situation and duty, has been placed by nature, to watch over his early years; to train him up in the paths of religion, of virtue, and of peace. An unceasing anxiety with regard to the interests of the young, a little

reading of biography, some observation of characters, and a great deal of conversation with wise and experienced men have led me to this conclusion, that in almost every case, the children of a prudent, intelligent, faithful, virtuous and religious mother become prosperous, happy, and honored in the world; whilst those of a negligent, ignorant, or sinful mother, rarely attain common respectability, and much less eminence or distinction. Doubtless, some exceptions to this general principle might be easily pointed out, but they could not invalidate the testimony of 'the cloud of witnesses,' which might be adduced upon the opposite side of the question. Every person who has carefully looked into the world, with a view of tracing the formation of human character, must be convinced, that the influence of fathers is neither so great nor so extensive. The unhallowed example of many a worthless father has been rendered totally innoxious, by the wisdom and vigilance of a virtuous mother; whilst the most judicious arrangements and the most indefatigable exertions of the best of fathers have been entirely defeated by the perverse and sinful indulgence of weakly, affectionate and imprudent mothers.

Might not this very plain statement enforce a most salutary lesson, with regard to the education of females? From the cradle to the grave, they are the ornament, the solace, and the blessing of man. Our first smile is drawn forth by their tenderness, our returning cares are soothed by their sympathy, and, when sterner natures flee from the chamber of suffering, our latest sigh is answered by their affection. It is principally, however, as being the chief agents in forming the dispositions and characters of the rising generation, that their influence is powerful and

extensive, beyond all calculation. True, they sit not in the senate, but they form the legislators who are to guide the destinies of our country; they preside not upon the bench, and they enter not the jury box, yet the balance and the sword of justice are under their control; they do not ascend the pulpit, but the principles and usefulness of the divine are chiefly of their formation; they engage not in the toils of a profession, or the affairs of trade, but they mould the characters of those, upon whose integrity and talents the happiness of individuals and the prosperity of the nation so materially depend.

I do, then, seriously ask every good and every thinking man, if any education could be too extensive and too solid for human beings engaged in the discharge of such important duties; whose influence pervades the entire frame of society, reaching from the cottage to the palace, and extending in its results from time even to eternity? I know it is urged by many, that the sole business of woman is to regulate her domestic concerns, to promote the comfort of her husband, and to attend to the management of her children; and that, for such purposes, only a small share of learning or knowledge is required. Now the error here, lies not in a mistaken estimate of what are really the principal concerns of woman, (for undoubtedly the domestic circle is the proper sphere both of her usefulness and honor,) but in underrating the qualifications necessary for the faithful and efficient discharge of her important duties. The very regulation of the ordinary affairs of a household must be defective, where there is a want of order, and energy, and information, in the presiding intellect; and it is not easy to conceive how the rational enjoyments of an enlightened husband

can possibly be promoted by the society of a wife, in whose tastes and acquirements he can neither find sympathy nor edification. With regard to the management of children, no talents, no endowments can be too high for so important a task. Even in the lowest mechanical employment, the artisan requires to understand the proper use of his implements, and the nature of the materials upon which he is to operate ; and surely, a christian mother, whose own mind is either a waste or a wilderness, must be totally unfitted for enlarging the understandings, cultivating the dispositions, regulating the principles, and forming the habits of her offspring. In truth, such a mother is doubly unfitted for her station ; first, by incapacity ; and again, in being unable to secure that filial reverence and respect, which are essential to the due efficacy of all parental instruction.

Let it not be supposed, however, that I am an enemy to what are termed 'female accomplishments.' On the contrary, I consider them, when moderately and rationally pursued, as eminently calculated to refine the taste and harmonize the feelings of those who possess them, whilst they powerfully tend to sweeten the intercourse of the domestic and friendly circle, to augment the enjoyments of general society, and to cast a sunshine over the gloomy realities of life. Amidst the ten thousand pursuits and cares of the world, the mind and the spirits require relaxation, as well as the body ; and the tastes and circumstances of women peculiarly fit them for the acquisition of those accomplishments, which interest the understanding, whilst they soothe the heart. Many a father have I seen, after a toilsome and anxious day, relaxing his brow of care, and considering all his exertions

as more than repaid, whilst, with parental pride, he noted the improvement, or joined in the innocent amusements of his children, and cast a look of gratified affection upon the faithful companion of his life! I know nothing in philosophy, I know nothing in religion, which forbids such feelings and such enjoyments. Yet, I am persuaded, that accomplishments should only be the adjuncts of education, and not its principal business, or its chief end; and, in my mind, there is nothing incompatible between elegance and solidity. On the contrary, I am convinced, that the mind which is most enlarged by the possession of substantial knowledge, is the best calculated to appreciate and to enjoy those less serious branches of education, which tend to cheer and to ornament society. I do not despair of seeing the time, when young females shall consider themselves infinitely better employed in reading the real history of nations, than in perusing volumes of unnatural fiction, which only fills the mind with false ideas, and the heart with injurious feelings — when they shall be no more ashamed of learning ancient than modern languages, or of attending instructions in philosophy which would enlarge their understandings, than of frequenting the gaudy circles of fashion and amusement — when they shall think it more honorable to possess such a knowledge of moral science and the principles of human action and duty, as would render them useful mothers, than to imitate, after years of labor, 'the wing of a butterfly, or the hue of a rose.'

It may be inquired, however, would I educate every woman for a governess? Yes, most assuredly. Every mother is, or at least ought to be, a teacher of the holiest and most interesting kind. Various avocations may pre-

vent her from being a regular instructer, but no earthly consideration should preclude her from being the occasional, nay the frequent teacher of her children. In order that she may be able to act thus, to select proper assistants in the sacred work, to judge of their fidelity in the execution, and to preserve a spirit of energy and zeal, it is absolutely necessary that she should herself possess the requisite qualifications. I care not what may be her station, this is her duty. If her rank be humble, prudence, economy, and a laudable desire to advance her family demand it. If her rank be exalted, many considerations render it still more imperative. Too many, I fear, in affluent circumstances imagine, that because they can afford ample remuneration to competent instructers, they are therefore exempted from all personal attention to the education of their children. No error could be more fatal. In the higher ranks of life, where young persons are perpetually surrounded by fawning and interested flatterers, where the innate vanity and presumption of the human heart are inflamed by indulgence and conscious superiority, no authority less than parental is adequate to restrain the passions, to discipline the principles, to form the habits, and to animate exertion. And, let it be farther considered, that in proportion as the station is exalted, so is the influence of the individual occupying it extended. The happiness of thousands frequently depends upon the disposition and character of a single person. The affluent man, of enlightened piety, humane sentiments, cultivated understanding, and enlarged views of public usefulness, is often the means of diffusing over a wide circle the inestimable blessings of

religion and morality, of industry and prosperity, of cheerfulness and peace. On the other hand, the ignorant and profligate man of wealth, without knowledge or inclination to do good, possessing ample means for the gratification of degrading passions and tyrannical propensities, necessarily becomes a moral pestilence, diffusing the contagion of vice and misery through all the channels of social life around him. Of what peculiar importance is it, therefore, not only for their own honor and happiness, but also for the good of society, that persons occupying influential stations should receive a solid and virtuous education.

The christian mother, who imagines that her rank exempts her from the duties of parental vigilance and instruction, wofully miscalculates the nature of her office; and she who looks upon it as a degradation to become the instructress of her own children, is a total stranger to that which constitutes the highest honor of her sex and station. In the circle of fashion, she may be fair and lovely; her accomplishments may secure the admiration of others, and swell her own heart with vanity : but, after all, such is not the true scene of her genuine interest, and respectability and happiness. The sphere of her substantial, unfading honor lies far away from the crowded haunts of amusement, in a peaceful and secluded apartment of her happy home. There, in the midst of her little ones, she represses the frowardness of one, encourages the diffidence of another, and 'in familiar phrase and adapted story' pours lessons of instruction into the minds of all. With a mother's gentleness, she draws forth their talents; with a mother's firmness, she regulates their tempers;

with a mother's prudence, she prepares them to adorn their station upon earth; and with a mother's piety, she leads them in the onward path towards heaven. The wide expanse of the globe presents no object more interesting, more exalted, or more useful than such a christian parent; nor is there any spot of nature, on which the eye of Omniscience rests with more complacency, than upon the retired and peaceful scene of her virtuous labors. Such a mother becomes the centre of a system of usefulness, of whose extent the imagination can form no adequate conception; for there is not a single worthy principle which she instils, that may not descend as the ornament and solace of ten thousand generations. For my own part, I have always considered parents, who devoted their leisure hours to the instruction of their offspring, as the most estimable and the most useful members of society; and I never could read the story of the Spartan king, who was found by the Persian ambassadors playing in the midst of his children, without looking upon that circumstance as more honorable than all his victories. I do especially believe, that no plan could be devised for elevating the entire frame of society half so efficacious, as that which would produce a succession of well-instructed, judicious and virtuous christian mothers. The laws of the statesman, and the lessons of the divine, would be but feeble instruments of prevention and reformation, in comparison with the hallowed, all-pervading agency of maternal wisdom, energy and affection. Let it not be supposed, however, that I am the advocate of visionary schemes of education. It would neither be practicable nor desirable, for every woman to become deeply learn-

ed; but I would have every female substantially educated, in proportion to her rank, her abilities and her opportunities. This is surely neither unreasonable nor impracticable; and I am persuaded, that in this age of increasing light, it is a subject which will gradually secure a larger portion of public consideration.

The paramount importance of a minute and anxious attention to the principles and habits of the young, naturally suggests the absolute necessity of the strictest vigilance in the selection of domestic servants. In all families, above the very lowest ranks, domestics are necessarily the frequent, and, in many cases, the ordinary companions of children. It is much to be lamented, that the young are seldom admitted to the presence of their parents, except at stated times of formal exhibition and indulgence. They are, therefore, at a period of life, when the mind is perpetually demanding information, and the heart peculiarly susceptible of impressions, thrown almost entirely upon their own resources, or upon the casual assistance of servants. If these be ignorant, they cannot satisfy the cravings of the mind after knowledge; if they be superstitious, they must inspire visionary and enfeebling terrors; and if they be blasphemous or licentious in their language, they necessarily corrupt the principles and habits. Have we not all known melancholy instances, in which the most affectionate and judicious exertions of parents have been totally counteracted, even by the casual association of a profligate domestic? and what must be the fatal consequences, when the young mind is exposed to the perpetual influence of ignorance and immorality? Yet, how seldom do these considerations occur, even in

the engagement of those domestics whose special province is the management of the young! The principal qualifications sought for are, manners, accent, personal neatness, and habits of attention. These, I admit, are all desirable; but what are they, without the accompaniment of religious principles, pure conversation, and a virtuous deportment? Few individuals would be disposed to admit into their families persons who were laboring under a contagious disease, although the calamity could only be temporary, and the utmost penalty, earthly loss: and, yet, how little do they dread the admission of those who may infect the very hearts and spirits of their children with a moral pestilence, equally awful and incurable! For my own part, I solemnly declare, that I would prefer the introduction of a fever into my dwelling, to the residence of a servant, for a single month, in familiar intercourse with my children, whose habits were immoral, and whose conversation was indecent or profane.

The truth is, the best exertions of parents must fail to preserve their offspring uncontaminated, amidst unprincipled and profligate domestics. It, therefore, becomes a matter of the most serious concern to every christian parent, to ascertain the best means of securing a succession of servants, worthy of his confidence and protection. This desideratum can only be obtained, by conferring upon the humbler ranks the means of procuring a reasonable literary education, based upon the solid foundation of religious and moral principles. Every man of affluence, and every man in the middle walks of life, may assist in carrying forward this great work, not merely by his pecuniary contributions, but also by his

countenance and personal exertions in promoting Sunday School instruction. The Lord's day is peculiarly favorable for the inculcation of religious principles; and I know not how the immediate service of God can be more properly preceded or followed, than by acts of beneficence and good-will towards our fellow-creatures. Let it be remembered, too, that our exertions in this holy cause will be like the mercy, so beautifully described by the poet, 'twice blest — blessing him that gives, and him that receives.' Besides 'the luxury of doing good,' we shall receive a solid recompense in the faithful, virtuous, and exemplary domestics, whom we are preparing for ourselves, and our children, and our children's children. Were we, in addition to these instructions, to require of all the inmates of our dwellings a regular attendance upon the stated ordinances of religion, and to associate them with ourselves in our family devotions, we should still farther secure their fidelity and affection.

Yet, after all, we ought to be the principal companions of our own children. It is unnatural, it is criminal, it is destructive, to throw them almost exclusively into the society of those, who must be, at best, but ill qualified, and not much inclined, to be their instructers. Can there be any soil more worthy of our sedulous cultivation, than the minds and the hearts of our own offspring? The period is approaching in which we shall have to render an account for every gift of Providence; and for none shall we be more awfully responsible, than for the immortal souls committed to our care.

If education be of such vast importance, as I have endeavored to demonstrate, every attempt to explain the

most proper method of conducting it is entitled to serious consideration. I proceed, therefore, to make a few plain observations, which may, I trust, under the influence of divine grace, be the means of impressing the minds of some with a deeper sense of duty, and assisting conscientious parents to 'train up their children in the way they should go.'

Good principles being equally the ground-work of all true virtue and of all solid happiness, parents ought very early to impress upon the minds of their offspring an abiding sense of the existence, the presence, and the providence of God, and thus lay the foundation of a religious education. I say, of a religious education; for I am firmly pursuaded, that all instruction, which is not connected with the great principles of Christianity, rests upon a basis totally devoid of permanency and security. If parents inculcate the necessity of diligent application, obliging manners, and moral respectability, merely upon the ground of temporal convenience or advantage, their education is like 'the house which was built upon the sand;' for, when the winds and the floods of trial and temptation beat upon it, it will assuredly fall. But an education conducted under the sacred sanctions of religion resembles 'the house which was founded upon a rock;' it will stand secure, a shelter and a home, amidst all the storms and agitation of the world.

I am very far from desiring, however, that young persons should become religious professors, unnatural devotees, or ignorant controversialists. Ridiculous stories of wonderful children have been told, and written, and circulated, to the serious injury of true piety, and the mortification of all sober-minded Christians. Poor young creatures scarcely acquainted with the rudiments of

human learning, and knowing no more of the divine word, than the few passages which they have been taught to repeat in confirmation of some favorite dogma, are often represented as 'understanding all knowledge and all mysteries;' as more competent judges of the sublime doctrines of the Bible, than some of the wisest and the best of men, and as enjoying the immediate 'testimony of the Spirit,' with regard to the truth of their own opinions. Such representations have the most powerful tendency to destroy the natural modesty and ingenuousness of youth, to fill the mind with delusion and the heart with presumption, to encourage false profession, and undermine the very foundations of rational piety. Yet, whilst I feel myself bound to condemn such a pretended and unattainable knowledge of the 'deep things of Heaven' on the part of mere children, I do most strenuously maintain, from my own observation and experience, that they may be very early taught to know that there is a God who made them, who supplies all their wants, who sees all their actions, who is acquainted with all their thoughts, who is pleased with them when they do right, and who is offended when they do evil. We all know, how early imaginary fears may be impressed upon the mind, and how exceedingly difficult it is to efface them, even when they are disowned by the growing reason of succeeding years. In many cases, the highest powers of understanding, and the most profound sentiments of religion, are inadequate to remove them. The celebrated Dr Johnson, one of the greatest ornaments of English literature, who labored so zealously and so successfully to eradicate moral error from the minds of others, was himself, to the latest hour of his existence, a

slave to the superstitious dread of apparitions! How easy and how salutary a task must it then be, to imbue the mind with the rational and filial fear of God—a fear which grows with the powers of the understanding, and increases with the devout affections of the heart! There is certainly no other sentiment, in the entire range of virtuous feelings, calculated to be so powerfully and so permanently influential on human conduct, as a reverential and abiding sense of the constant presence and providence of the Supreme Being. Even before the eyes of their fellow-mortals, men are deterred from committing acts of indecency and criminality; and surely, if they could be induced seriously to consider, that the eye of Omniscience is the perpetual witness of all their thoughts, and desires, and actions, the most powerful barrier would be erected against the inroads of all impiety and immorality. It appears to be upon this principle, that 'the fear of the Lord' is so emphatically called in Scripture, 'the beginning of wisdom;' and therefore it is a matter of the highest importance, to ascertain in what manner a sentiment so valuable may be most effectually attained. All men are agreed with regard to the period of life, at which this important principle ought to be inculcated. 'Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth,' is a precept received with universal approbation. But, whilst this perfect accordance of opinion exists with respect to the paramount importance of endeavoring to infuse principles of piety into the human mind at a very early period of existence, there is by no means the same agreement of sentiment as to the best means of accomplishing so desirable an end. I shall not occupy time, by examining the various opinions

which have been advanced upon this subject, but content myself with explaining a very simple method, which, from experience, I would recommend as efficacious in raising the minds and the affections, even of very young persons, to the glorious Author of all good.

It may be safely laid down as an incontrovertible position, that the mere use of words, how proper soever in themselves, to which the person employing them attaches no meaning, can never have the smallest influence, either upon the heart or the understanding; and I think it is equally evident, that no external form or ceremony, the design and tendency of which are totally incomprehensible, can in any degree accomplish the object for which it was instituted. Let us apply these plain principles to the ordinary method of inculcating early sentiments of reverence towards the Deity. The child is compelled to kneel down at its mother's knee, to assume a grave countenance, to join its little hands in form of devotion, to repeat words of which it no more comprehends the meaning than if they were Hebrew, and to go through an irksome ceremony, from day to day, with a listless heart and an uninterested mind. Is it any wonder that, under such a system, the poor child should so often cast its eyes from object to object, or that it should become intolerably drowsy, or that it should manifest innumerable symptoms of uneasiness, whilst it repeats a task which it learned with no feeling but that of pain? Is not such a system, I would ask, eminently calculated to defeat the very end which it desires to promote, and to associate the service of God, in the mind of the child, with feelings directly opposed to those of reverence and devotion?

Nor is it a less injurious plan, when children are a little farther advanced, to attempt instructing them in the general principles of Christianity, by requiring them to commit, as an irksome task, volumes of hymns and books of scripture — in which drudgery the memory is, almost universally, the only faculty employed. If to this we add the consideration, that these painful exercises are usually connected with the Lord's day, we perceive the completion of a system, preeminently adapted to render the bible anything but 'a pleasure,' and the sabbath anything but 'a delight.' Surely, it is as impolitic as it is unjust to make religion thus appear to the youthful mind, as if it were unfriendly to happiness, and to connect its principles and ordinances with unprofitable labor and painful sacrifices. Such a mode of instruction has a natural tendency to destroy the feelings of genuine piety, to produce a constrained and hypocritical profession for a season, and to terminate in eventual infidelity. I have known several instances of such a melancholy progress, in the children of sincerely pious, but excessively rigid parents. This circumstance amply proves, how delicate a task it is to regulate the human mind; to preserve the proper medium between a criminal neglect, which would permit evil propensities to grow without control, and an injudicious severity of discipline, that would create a rebellious impatience of restraint, and an insatiable craving for the cup of forbidden pleasure. I am fully persuaded, that such a happy medium can only be attained, by making religious education an affair of the heart and the understanding, instead of a mere matter of words, or formal profession, or abstract theory.

I would therefore teach the first lessons of piety to the young, in the fair and glorious book of Nature. I would lead them through the cultivated fields, and the pleasant pastures, and the flowery meadows, and the leafy groves. When the husbandman casts his seed into the bosom of the earth, when the green blade springs forth, and when the ripe ear yields abundance, I would show them the providence of God, in the mode of supplying their daily wants. When they listened with joy to the music of the groves, when they looked with delight on the peaceful cattle feeding upon the green pastures, when they remarked the industry of the bee, or the sportive fluttering of the butterfly, or the happiness of the myriads of beings that were enjoying existence in the air, in the waters, or upon the earth, I would lead them to consider the infinite goodness of God, in the diffusion of such unbounded enjoyment. In the refreshing breeze, the reviving shower, and the animating sun; in the formation of every tree, and plant, and flower, as well as of every animated being, I would lead them to admire the transcendent wisdom of their Creator. And when the dews of evening should begin to fall, when they were returning to their peaceful homes with invigorated bodies and joyous spirits, I would point to the fair moon, rising in tranquil beauty, and to one star after another, appearing in the glorious firmament of heaven; and I would lead them to reverence the power and majesty of Him, who had formed all the starry worlds which they beheld, and who had, no doubt, also peopled them with inhabitants! At the season of refreshment I would remind them, by the devout expression of my own gratitude, and by recalling to their recollection what they had themselves witnessed, to whom they were

indebted for all their comforts and blessings. When the hour of repose drew near, I would kneel down in the midst of my children, as every christian parent is bound to do; I would praise my Creator for all his mercies, supplicate a continuation of his bounties, and fervently implore him to bless my little ones. And when they afterwards addressed their 'Father in Heaven' in personal prayer, before retiring to rest, they would no longer offer a heartless and a mindless service; they would know whom they worshipped, and feel why they ought to be grateful. Thus, might the hearts of the young become truly interested in the cause of religion, and imbued with the sacred odour of piety, which would ever retain its freshness, although they should be broken by the shocks of misfortune, or withered by the winter of age.

I know it may be said by many, that what I have been advancing is all visionary and theoretical; but I am not afraid of its being so considered by the wise and the experienced, who have carefully studied human nature, and observed the progress of the human mind. Children think much sooner, and much more accurately, than most persons imagine. Indeed, fond and partial parents are always sensible of this in their own offspring. They are quite delighted with their shrewd remarks, and often astonished and puzzled by their curious questions; but they take it for granted that these are only indications of extraordinary talents in their own children, and that all others are comparatively ignorant and uninteresting. This, however, is a mere error of parental partiality; for the mass of other children are fully equal to their own; and all are much more, and much earlier the objects of religious and moral culture than is generally believed.

Their ignorance of language is the principal barrier in the way of their instruction. They are often unable to find words to explain their own ideas, and we have usually as much difficulty in selecting terms suited to give them a proper conception of ours. Yet, it is wonderful, how much knowledge, especially with regard to external objects, they may acquire, under moderately judicious treatment, where affection never loses patience in consequence of their unceasing interrogatories, and where a sound discretion adapts the language of explanation to the extent of their capacities. No more fatal mistake could be made in the treatment of children, than repressing their curiosity by refusing to answer their questions. An inquisitive disposition ought to be particularly encouraged, as it opens the most favorable inlet for knowledge at a very early period of life. The information which a child desires to obtain always affords it pleasure, and usually makes a permanent impression upon its mind; whilst, on the contrary, knowledge which is pressed upon it by others is generally received with indifference, and soon passes away. Many questions put by children may be trifling, many absurd, and many difficult to be answered; but the very reply of a judicious parent to a frivolous interrogatory may be so framed, as to correct an error of judgment, and the most difficult question should receive an answer, if possible; or, at the very least, a satisfactory reason should be assigned for refusing a reply. In everything connected with religious principles and impressions, it is peculiarly important that this course should be pursued. If a child inquire, (and what child does not?) who made the sun, and the moon, and the stars — who formed the mountains, and the rivers, and

the beasts of the field — who created himself, and his parents, and all other human beings — would it not be the utmost fatuity, to omit so favorable an opportunity of inculcating the first and most influential principle of all religion — the existence, the power, and the providence of God? That this great principle may be inculcated, and that an abiding conviction of the constant presence of the Deity may be impressed upon the mind, at a very early period of life, I do aver from experience; and in this sentiment, I am convinced I shall have the concurrence of every judicious parent, and of every man who has attentively considered the tendencies of human nature.

This habitual reverence of the Supreme Being will be materially strengthened in the minds of the young, by conducting them regularly to the public services of religion, and thus associating all their previous sentiments of piety with the hallowed solemnities of the sanctuary, and the deliberate approbation of the wise and good. Parents, who neglect the private and public duties of the Lord's day, who spend it in drowsy indifference, or degrade it into a season of worldly occupation or vain amusement, cannot expect that the love and fear of God should be established in the hearts of their children. These essential principles of piety, these surest foundations of moral respectability, are never to be found in the lukewarm and careless spirit; and what the father possesses not in himself, he cannot communicate to his son. For my own part, I have almost universally observed, that the decay of vital religion, in individuals and families, has exactly kept pace with their neglect of religious institutions. This is peculiarly true with regard to the young, who have no counterpoise for their

thoughtlessness and folly, save what is to be found in the habitual reverence of God. Christian parents, therefore who omit to lead their children to the sanctuary, neglect to furnish them with the most powerful defence against all the trials and all the temptations of the world.

The reading of the holy scriptures is another most effectual means of promoting a religious and moral education. They contain the charter of our salvation, the grounds of our duty, the objects of our faith, and the anchor of our hopes. They are a treasure of inestimable value to all, but especially to the young, who most require the instruction of divine wisdom. Without a knowledge of the sacred records all education must be defective. But, whilst 'all scripture, given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness,' the moral law, the prophecies, and the devotional parts of the Old Testament, with the whole of the christian revelation, are peculiarly adapted for the edification of the young. I do not say, that every part of the divine word is not calculated to afford salutary instruction to minds which are prepared to receive it; but, in the ceremonial law and the historical books of the Old Testament there are several things which appear to me but little suited to the capacities and feelings of youth. These I would leave for the consideration of riper years, and direct the mind principally to the dispensation of 'the glorious gospel of the grace of God.' Nor would I impose even this as an irksome task and fatiguing drudgery. I would not insist upon children's committing large portions of the New Testament to memory, lest I should create disgust and aversion, where I only desire to promote admiration and respect.

The injudicious system of enforcing a literal repetition of scripture, as a regular school-task, and sometimes as a penalty for idleness or misconduct, is pre-eminently calculated to destroy the very rudiments of piety in the human heart. This mischievous error has arisen from a misconception of the true nature of religion; from making it a concern merely of words and ideas, whereas in reality it is especially an affair of the affections; for 'it is the heart which God requires.' I would not thus attempt to instruct the young in a knowledge of the sacred volume; but, when they had previously considered and read a certain portion, I would question them with regard to its contents, and thus move onward in regular succession, with frequent reference to previous information, until the substance of the gospel should be engraven on their minds, and the spirit of the gospel infused into their hearts. Knowledge and feelings thus acquired would not vanish, like mere impressions of the memory, but would permanently remain as the guides and consolations of life, associated in the mind with pleasurable recollections. Besides, young persons educated on such a system would generally be steady in their religious principles. Having once drunk 'the waters of life' from the pure fountain of the divine word, they could scarcely turn to the polluted streams of human invention in after years.

As 'the chief corner stone' of a religious education, the minds of the young should be very frequently directed towards our blessed Saviour. They may not be able to appreciate all his labors of love, to understand all his divine instructions, to comprehend all the gracious purposes of his death, and resurrection, and mediation; but I know that, at a very early age, they may become truly

interested in his character and sufferings. I have seen the cheeks of an intelligent child suffused with tears, whilst reading the indignities of the judgment-hall, and the awful sufferings of Calvary. And, when the heart is thus impressed, every word from the lips of the gracious Being, who has become such an object of affectionate interest, is received with reverence and respect.

In the important work of early religious instruction parents must necessarily be the principal agents; but their labors acquire an additional efficacy, when they are aided by the ministers of the gospel. In the estimation of the young, there is always a sacredness attached to the ministerial character, which gives weight and energy to instruction; and I am fully persuaded that the faithful servant of Christ does not occupy so high a station of usefulness, even whilst he is delivering the holiest truths from the pulpit, as when he is engaged in the humble task of impressing lessons of wisdom and virtue upon the youthful mind. By such unostentatious labors he conciliates affection, prepares the soil for the good seed which he is afterwards to sow, and, independently of all higher considerations, secures an abundant harvest of respect and honor for his coming years. He may devote his mind to study, he may acquire the reputation of learning, or piety, or eloquence, and he may become an eminent preacher of righteousness; but, at the close of his mortal career, he will assuredly look back upon the peaceful hours, which he dedicated to the familiar instruction of the young, as by far the most profitable of his whole existence. A minister of the gospel who neglects this sacred duty, though he possessed the eloquence and the knowledge of a Paul, is still 'but as sounding brass,

or a tinkling cymbal.' He leaves the parents without encouragement or assistance, the children without knowledge, or motives to acquire it; and even his religious opinions, of which he boasts as having the peculiar sanction of truth, depend entirely for their extension upon the operations of chance, or the formal harangues of the pulpit. The work of the Lord cannot prosper in such hands; the canker-worm of indifference must gradually consume the very vitals of religion; and those, who commence the career of life without religious principles, will almost invariably continue it without moral practice. The ministers of the gospel, therefore, are peculiarly bound, by the most sacred and awful responsibility, to watch over the education of the rising generation; to aid and encourage parents in the diligent discharge of their arduous duties; and to diffuse around them the invaluable blessings of an early piety.

Religious sentiments, however, ought never to be inculcated as mere abstract principles. They should be constantly associated in the mind with moral feelings, and the active discharge of moral duties. Wanting this connexion, they are as a tree without fruit. The guardians of the young, therefore, should constantly labor to associate the filial fear of God with a reverence for his commandments, and the love of the Saviour with goodwill towards mankind. The important relative duties of integrity and truth, of generosity and kindness, of forgiveness and charity, ought to be enforced as the very end and essence of true religion. Above all things, the prevalent and degrading vice of falsehood should be carefully repressed, as offensive to God, destructive to the peace of society, and disgraceful to themselves. No

exertion, no vigilance, on the part of parents, can be too great to secure an inward love and habitual observance of truth. Where this great virtue is wanting, all other honorable principles must be deficient; and wherever it is to be found, we may confidently look for its natural attendants, integrity and benevolence. Kind and considerate treatment is always the most likely to secure the interests of truth; for I am persuaded that all falsehood has its origin in fear — the fear of punishment, or disapprobation. I would, therefore, pardon almost any folly or offence, not involving gross impiety or moral turpitude, in order to secure a habit of candor and veracity.

Next to the social virtues, those of a more immediately personal character may be very early inculcated; and upon these a large portion of human happiness necessarily depends. No period of life, above mere infancy, is too early for teaching self-denial and patience of control. Thousands of the hot and ungovernable spirits, that have brought sorrow upon themselves, and inflicted miseries upon others, owe their misfortunes and their crimes to uncorrected passions, and unsubdued peevishness of temper, in the very earliest stages of existence. The same wisdom of experience, which prevents a child from thrusting its hand a second time into a flame, would, under proper management, prevent it from indulging in violent bursts of passion. And I am persuaded, (for I have witnessed the fact,) that children might be almost as easily taught to refrain from tasting forbidden sweets by a salutary fear of incurring displeasure, as to avoid the repetition of actions accompanied by personal suffering.

But it may be inquired — if it be so easy a task to teach those early lessons of piety, morality, and self-restraint, why are not young persons universally trained up in such salutary habits? I answer — because some parents are criminally negligent, others injudiciously rigorous, many culpably indulgent, and almost all mistaken with regard to what ought to be the grand objects of human pursuits.

It is much to be lamented, that many persons, in all ranks of society, are criminally indifferent with respect to the principles and education of their children. This, however, is especially the case at the two extremes of the social scale. The lowest classes, fatigued with daily toil, harassed with returning wants, destitute of all the nobler aspirings of nature, and too frequently ignorant of the inestimable advantages of religious and moral culture, are contented if they can supply their children with the coarsest fare and scanty raiment. They have never themselves risen above the station in which they were born; they anticipate no higher destiny for their children; and they do not imagine that any very extensive endowments, either intellectual or moral, are necessary to the success of mere manual industry. Such persons are much more the objects of compassion than of censure, but the same palliation cannot be offered for the conduct of those in the other extreme of society, who are too often equally neglectful. Occupied with the enjoyments or the vanities of life, they too frequently commit the entire care of their offspring to mercenary hands; they are content with occasional reports of their progress, and rest satisfied that all must be well, when they are passing through the ordinary routine of fashionable education.

The minds of their children may remain a comparative blank, whilst their hearts are over-run with the rank weeds of irreligion and vice; and thus, those who are to influence the destinies of thousands are, not unfrequently, amongst the worst educated men in the community. Honorable exceptions to this statement, I am well aware, may easily be found, where persons of the highest rank are remarkably distinguished for their parental fidelity; but these exceptions are not of ordinary occurrence, and cannot invalidate the general rule.

Excessive rigor and injudicious severity on the part of parents are less common, but not less certain sources of irreligious feeling and immoral practice. Whilst some persons are so weakly affectionate as to perceive no failings in their children, others are so unnaturally harsh as to see nothing but imperfections. Influenced by an overweening vanity, they desire to see their children superior to all others, and are therefore subjected to incessant chagrin. Disappointed in their talents, discontented with their progress, and irritated because they want the polish of the world and the steadiness of age, they cast the blame of their own absurd mortification upon their unoffending offspring. With a wild impatience and tyranny, they demand exertions beyond their strength, expect a gravity beyond their years, refuse the most salutary indulgences, and, if they happen to be what is termed religious, exact a formality of devotion equally unnatural and absurd. The inevitable result of such a system is, that their children view them with terror instead of affection, hate those studies which are the perpetual sources of sorrow, endeavor to deceive those whom they cannot propitiate, and turn hypocrites in re-

ligion to avoid the penalty of sincerity. The perverted ingenuity of man could devise no plan of education more destructive of all piety and morality. The moment that a young person so educated is set free from the fetters with which he has been bound, and escapes from the unnatural tyranny by which he has been enslaved, he is prepared to give the reins to every passion, and to cast all religious and mor restraint to the winds.

It must be admitted, however, that culpable indulgence is a much more prevalent source of erroneous education, than that which I have just described. The natural, the laudable desire of the parental heart is, to confer happiness. Youth requires indulgence, and it would be equally barbarous and unwise to refuse it. Judicious kindness is the best instrument of human instruction; it calls forth all the native tendencies of the heart; nothing is hidden from the eye of affection. The entire character lies open to inspection; so that every virtuous tendency may be encouraged, and every vicious propensity restrained. To parental indulgence, therefore, I would prescribe no limits but those which would render it truly conducive to the happiness of its object. Now let it be considered, that in making a due estimate of happiness we must view the whole course of human life. We should never call that conducive to a man's happiness, which afforded him the enjoyment of a day at the heavy cost of miserable years. Upon this principle, the gratification of every appetite and desire on the part of the young, is but a wretched preparation for the vicissitudes of the world. In the busy haunts of men, every hand will not bring supplies like that of a gentle mother, nor every voice speak kindness like that of an indulgent

father. The unfortunate being, whose will has never been controlled, whose passions have never been restrained, is but ill suited for the conflicts of this selfish and bustling scene. I shall go farther, however, and say, that even in youth such an individual is never happy. I have always looked upon the poor child as an object of compassion, whose craving desires were most freely gratified. The wealth of the Indies, and all the ingenuity of man, could not supply its increasing demands. After exhausting all possible sources of gratification, its imagination would become its tormentor; and the object of ten thousand indulgences would be only a peevish and miserable creature. On the other hand, the child, whose unreasonable desires have been restrained, whose temper and passions have been subdued, to whom indulgence has been sometimes extended and sometimes refused, is uniformly cheerful and contented; a gratification withheld inflicts no pain, a favor conferred communicates real pleasure. It is evident, therefore, that a mind which has been weakened, and a heart which has been perverted by excessive indulgence, never can become the seat of manly thought, or generous sentiment.

To all other causes which impede the progress of a salutary education, may be added the mistaken estimate, too generally formed, of what ought to be the grand objects of human pursuit. I do not say, that upon this subject men make any serious mistake in theory, or in words, or in profession; all admit, that piety and virtue should be the primary objects of human desire. But what say their actions? Is it to the attainment of these that they principally direct the education of their children? On the contrary, have not all their exertions an

undivided view to the interests and enjoyments of the world? What efforts are constantly made, with respect to mere temporal instruction, to manners, to accomplishments, and to placing them on the road of fortune and reputation! These, I admit, are all desirable, but they should not be the chief objects sought for in education. We are expressly commanded by our blessed Lord, 'to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,' under the sacred assurance, that if we do so, 'all other necessary good things will be added unto us.' I shall, therefore, bring this discourse to a conclusion, by addressing a plain and brief exhortation to parents upon the important subject of their relative duties.

Christian parents, I address myself to you, most earnestly beseeching you to remember the awful responsibility of the parental character. The interests of time and of eternity hang upon your conduct. The children whom God has given you are the most sacred and valuable trust, which he could have committed to your care. With their lot your own is likewise cast. Should they, through your virtuous exertions, as the humble instruments of the grace of God, 'be raised to glory, and honor, and eternal life,' you also 'shall have your crown of rejoicing;' but if, through your neglect or criminality, they should go down to sorrow, 'then will their blood be required at your hands!' O, my fellow Christians, what an awful consideration is this! You would stand at the bed of their earthly suffering with afflicted hearts, and mourn even under the dispensation of Providence;—with what feelings, then, would you contemplate the misery of their immortal souls, and look upon yourselves as the guilty cause of

all their sorrows! I beseech you, brethren, by all the promises and all the threatenings of the divine word, to address yourselves diligently to the transcendently important duties of your station. In so sacred a cause indifference is crime. Let not their minds and their hearts remain without instruction; but whilst you inculcate the sublime principles of the gospel, let religion appear to them in all her native loveliness, as a gracious angel of purity and peace. Let no harshness of language, no austerity of manner, no unnatural exactions on your part, lead them to look upon piety as unfriendly to their happiness. Show them rather, that religion checks no decent joy, forbids no innocent pleasure. Make it your rational and delightful task,

> 'To try each art, reprove each fond delay,
> Allure to brighter worlds, and lead the way.'

But, whilst you manifest your christian spirit and temper by all becoming acts of reasonable kindness, never forget that religion gives no sanction to those criminal indulgences, which corrupt the heart and degrade the character. It is natural, it is laudable, it is useful to be indulgent; it is even right, perhaps, not to appear to observe trifling faults and follies, involving no depravity of principle, and leading to no injurious results; but, wherever the gratification of an appetite or a desire might lead, even in its remote consequences, to destructive habits or immoral actions, the firmest resistance should be maintained. It is chiefly from mothers, that undue indulgence is to be apprehended. Beneficently gifted by the Deity with a stronger portion of natural affection, to sustain them in the discharge of

the irksome and important duties which devolve upon them, they can scarcely be blamed for an excess of tenderness ; although it is our bounden duty to warn them of its consequences. I would ask, then, any christian mother, why she often withholds correction, which she believes to be necessary, and indulges with gratifications, which she knows to be injurious ? Her probable answer would be — that she cannot bear the idea of inflicting pain upon a creature that is so dear to her heart ! But, were her child laboring under a dangerous disease, would she not administer the most nauseous medicine, or subject it to the most painful operation, in order to restore it to health and soundness? Or, suppose that it clamored for some sweet, that was mingled with a deadly poison, would she gratify its palate at the expense of its life? No; in such cases, she would not only judge correctly, but also act rightly. And is the case less urgent or less important, because her child only labors under a moral distemper, or because he only desires to enjoy a momentary gratification, which will poison his mind and corrupt his heart? Surely, every argument, which would influence her in the instance of bodily suffering, or the refusal of the poisoned dainty, ought to have a thousand fold the force in the case of moral disease, or moral contagion. Just in proportion to the difference between body and soul, time and eternity, should be her serious estimate of her maternal duty. Never ought she to shrink, in destructive weakness, from a prompt obedience to the command of scripture: ‘ Withhold not correction from thy child; if thou beatest him with a rod he will not die, and thou mayest thereby deliver his soul from destruction.’ The

pain of a moment may save him from years of suffering; and the unwarrantable indulgence of an hour may be followed by ages of remorse!

The malignity of a demon could devise no system more destructive to virtue and happiness, than one often generated in the fond heart of a mother; I refer to the deeply culpable practice of concealing the offences of children from the knowledge of their fathers, and the still more criminal custom of supplying them in secret with the means of frivolous or sensual gratification. Were a mother to place a dagger in the hands of her son, to be turned against his own breast, she would be arming him with a much less dangerous weapon, than a supply of money for purposes of riot and debauchery. By such disastrous means, millions of young persons have been overwhelmed with destruction. And yet, unfortunate mothers, who practise these things, often complain of the ingratitude of their children, and wonder that they do not love them more, and respect them more! Now, the only wonder to me is, that such mothers should expect any return of gratitude or affection. After having corrupted their children from infancy by ruinous indulgence; after having taught them hypocrisy and fraud by their own example; after having put the poisoned cup of sensuality and crime into their very hands — it would be amazing, if they entertained towards them any other sentiments than those of contempt and aversion. The very indulgences, upon which they rest as a ground of affection, have destroyed all the native and amiable sensibilities of the heart. I do not recollect having seen, in the whole course of my life, a weakly and indiscriminately indulgent mother, sin-

cerely respected and beloved by her children; but I have known many, who have been repaid for their injudicious kindness by heart-rending neglect or insult. The firm and prudent mother alone, who has the good sense to unite general kindness with occasional and salutary restraint, becomes an object of permanent respect and affection. Her tenderness is justly appreciated, because it is considered as a proof of approbation, and not as a mere thoughtless instinctive impulse; and even her very denial of hurtful gratification is accompanied by a manner and an explanation eminently calculated to enforce conviction and secure esteem. Such a mother walks amidst her children as an object of affectionate reverence, an equitable distributor of rewards and punishments; from whose justice, propriety of conduct is always secure of a recompense, and from whose weakness, criminality cannot speculate upon impunity.

If there be anything, which, above all other considerations, I would press upon parents with peculiar earnestness, it is this—that, in the management of children, there should be no apparent diversity of opinion or system between father and mother. Wherever such difference exists, it is uniformly destructive; the judgment of each parent being alternately undervalued, and the authority of both too often eventually undermined. It usually happens, indeed, in such cases, that a wretched system of deceit and tyranny springs into existence. The mother frequently encourages or connives at actions, of which the father disapproves; concealment or apology is therefore her object, whilst detection and punishment are his. Such a course once begun, action and re-action mutually increase the evil.

The more the father is deceived, he becomes the more severe; and in proportion as his severity increases, the mother redoubles, in concert with the child, her efforts of deception. Thus, both parents sin against nature; the one in fostering folly and hypocrisy, the other in becoming a tyrant. The child, too, is eventually taught to sin against nature — to despise one parent, and to hate another. And, what is equally deplorable, the mutual affection and confidence of the parents themselves are impaired; and that very being, who ought to be the most sacred bond of union, often becomes a source of division and alienation. Whatever diversity of opinion, therefore, may happen to exist between fathers and mothers, it should be entirely settled or compromised in private, that the slightest symptom of it may not appear before their children. A divided authority is always weak; and there can be no case in which it is more destructive, for 'a house to be divided against itself,' than in the education of the young. Parental wisdom should never be doubted, parental impartiality should never be suspected, parental authority should never be the subject of dispute. If a mother be too indulgent, let there be a private admonition; if a father be too severe, there ought to be a secret remonstrance. Even where a restraint may have been tyrannical, or a punishment inflicted beyond due bounds, there should never be a sudden and repentant relaxation. Such alternate rigor and relenting are exceedingly common, and exceedingly mischievous. The boy hates a power that is exercised without reason, speculates upon undue indulgence as a recompense for unmerited suffering, and looks upon himself rather

as the victim of his father's improper passion, than as the object of a just and necessary correction. To prevent such consequences, it is the part of true wisdom to follow the gentler suggestions of nature; and to keep always rather within than beyond the bounds of rigorous justice.

You are no doubt anxious, my christian friends, to establish your children in circumstances of worldly competence and respectability. This is a natural, a laudable, a religious desire. An honest independence is one of the greatest blessings of existence. It enables a man to walk amidst his fellows, of whatever rank, with a firm step, a manly aspect, and a tranquil heart. It affords him the means of moderate, rational, and decent enjoyment, both in his individual and social capacity; and, what is still more, it enables him to 'taste the luxury of doing good.' But, let it ever be remembered, that even this valuable independence should never be purchased by sacrifices or exertions, which would raise a blush upon the cheek, or excite a pang in the heart. If you can exalt your children to affluence and station by honorable means, whilst you impress those sound principles of religion and morality, which will enable them to enjoy and to improve the blessings of their lot, you become not merely the benefactors of your families, but also of your kind. If, however, it be your sole object to confer affluence upon them for its own sake, without any attention to the dispositions and virtues which would render it a source of personal and public advantage, you would more consult their substantial interest and happiness by placing them in the humblest

condition of honest industry. I solemnly declare that I would rather bequeath to my child the honorable inheritance of good principles and a good name, than 'millions of silver and gold' with an ungoverned spirit, or a corrupted heart. We all know the uncertainty of reputation, and fortune, and power. We farther know that were they even permanent in their own nature, they have not the capacity of conferring virtue or happiness. On the contrary, they have a natural tendency to render the heart presumptuous, to inflame the passions, and to foster crime. Neither can they ward off the stroke of disease, nor the shafts of calamity. In the gloomy hour of dissolution, 'when the heart sinks, and the spirits fail, and there is no pleasure in life,' they cannot afford one gleam of hope, or one moment of consolation. Under such circumstances, how different is the lot of him, who has been educated with sound principles of piety and morality! With regard to all his true interests, he is entirely independent of the chances and changes of the world; and even in the last solemn hour, the light of a good conscience and the staff of christian hope cheer and sustain his spirit, as he journeys 'through the valley of the shadow of death,' to a better country and a Father's home.

In conclusion, christian parents, if you desire that your children should be duly guided by your instructions, show them in all things the sincerity and value of your precepts, by their happy influence upon your own 'lives and conversation.' Example is the most agreeable and the most powerful instructer. As they learn your language, copy your manners, and acquire your

habits of thinking upon ordinary subjects, so will they become imbued with your christian temper and principles. But, remember, if you 'walk not worthy of the high vocation wherewith you are called,' your example must be destructive, and you can no longer be objects of affection or respect. Do not force your children to err against nature. No child can love a tyrant, a sensualist, a despiser of religion, or a neglecter of parental duties. Walk in the midst of your families, in the constant exercise of kindness tempered with firmness, of piety without austerity, of holiness adorned by cheerfulness, and you cannot fail, in the virtues and happiness of your children, to reap an abundant harvest of joy and peace.